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Long-proven rhythm method is effective, as government begins promotion

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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www.inq7.net

Look who's talking about a 'gangster-minded clique'

By Carlito Pablo

Gov't: MNLF must disarm first before dev't projects

By John Lohaj Jacellano

3 JI militants, 1 Abu fall

THE ORIGINAL EDSA

THE WANDERING bronze statue of Ninoy Aquino—cast in Rome in 1983, flown to the United States, put up in Makati, donated to the City of Manila—has finally found a home at the People Power Monument along Edsa. A GPWN employee dusts up the sculpture by Toms Concepcion on time for its unveiling by Aquino's widow former President Cory Aquino on Friday, Feb. 25. The statue was among the first made after the Aquino assassination on Aug. 21, 1983.

Makati blast suspects to be presented to media today

By Christine Ruguero and Philip C. Tubeza

Edsa I started with Ninoy

By Fe Zamora

2 Edsas the same: No real change of heart

By Eugenia Duran-Apostol

Did Roldan's girlfriend try to commit suicide?

By Christine Ruguero

Old boxer's final round wins forgiveness

By Carlo P. Gomez

HAPPY BOUT: Australia-based former lightweight boxer Willie Cardona asks his daughter Josie for forgiveness after abandoning her, her two brothers and their mother for the past 33 years.

Suzette pal of kidnapped boy's mom since nursery

By Luige A. del Puerto

JUST BETWEEN US, VETS: Sixty years ago, the Japanese prison camp in Los Baños was liberated by Filipino guerrillas even before US paratroopers could land. Among the prisoners was Fr. James Reuters, SJ, who marched a commemorative hedge during the rite of remembrance on Wednesday.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

More cases vs Martin Soriano

By Lala B. Salaverria

MARTIN Soriano's woes are not yet over.

Yesterday, former actress Aurora Sevilla surfaced as the National Bureau of Investigation to file complaints against Soriano for allegedly taking her car and her son's condominium unit, including all its furnishings, in 1999.

Sevilla said she had not recovered the car nor the condo unit despite repeated attempts to retrieve.

"He didn't even return to me my son's property that was left in the condo despite my pleas. Even by proper process, just then," a tearful Sevilla recounted to reporters yesterday after she met with NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco.

Soriano, however, denied taking the condominium unit, saying he paid the actress P3 million in cash for the condo and have the documents to back it up.

"She will settle this in court," he said in reply to the actress' allegations.

Soriano, a frontrunner NBI intelligence agent, was arrested last month for kidnapping. He was also accused by police asset Mary "Honeybee" Ong of kidnapping her and her mother.

He was caught in the NBI yesterday for questioning in connection with Ong's complaint.

But Sevilla said the kidnapping is poor her claim against the former NBI intelligence agent.

She said she met Soriano in February or March of 1999 at the Grand Boulevard Hotel after they were introduced by Marian Rivera, a common friend. She said Marian was a moneylender at the casinos.

Shortly after the meeting, she ran into Soriano inside the hotel and needed cash quickly. So she pawned her and P3.2 million Mercedes Benz to Soriano through Marian for P500,000, fully intending to buy it back the next day.

However, when Sevilla tried to repatriate her Soriano allegedly refused to return it. She later learned that the car was already registered under a new owner in the Land Transportation Office and its plate number changed.

A day after the incident, Soriano allegedly took possession of the condominium unit in the Bonifacio Heights BHH along Mandaluyong in Pasig City, which was under her son's name and which she was holding in trust for the latter.

Sevilla recalled that she was holding an open house at the condominium unit for prospective tenants but later left, claiming it pained her to see people trying to rent her home.

When she returned in the evening, the condo unit was already locked up and the entry codes changed.

She said she later learned that Soriano and his men were behind the incident after one of the latter's henchmen allegedly told her that the unit already belonged to Soriano.

Upon hearing this, she called up Soriano to plead that he return the unit, but he allegedly refused to do so.

Showdown over VAT looms; 'bloody' Senate-House battle seen

By Carlos Pabile and Cynthia Balana

THE HOUSE and the Senate looked ready to usher in a confrontation over the administration measure proposing to increase the value-added tax rate from the present 10 percent to 12 percent.

House Speaker Jose de Venecia yesterday said the process of reconciling the differing positions of the two chambers on the VAT could become "bloody."

De Venecia said the House would not budge in its position on increasing the VAT from 10 percent to 12 percent because the bill had already been approved by the whole body.

Asked how "bloody" the reconciliation would be, the Speaker said in jest, "Well, at a certain point, it will need some blood transfusion."

Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., responding to Sen. Ralph Recto's statement that the Senate was looking for "more creative ways" to raise public revenues, rose on the floor into Tagalog to denounce the suggestion.

Locsin reminded the Senate that under the Constitution, all revenue bills must emanate from the House and that the Senate can only either concur with amendments or reject the proposed measure.

"But they can craft any bill on any subject regarding taxation because it only there to do that, because it only there is the creative, that is as much in the House," said the fiery Locsin.

Locsin's scathing suggestion by Recto, the Senate has indicated it would reject the Malacañang proposal to increase the VAT rate by 20 percent but proposes lifting the VAT exemptions of certain sectors, like the independent power producers and oil firms and, increase corporate rates to 35 percent and reduce personal income taxes by 20 percent.

Majority Leader Rep. Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Davao City) said Recto was "out of bounds."

"The Senate can only concur or reject amendments accompanying revenue measures but it cannot come out with an entirely new proposal to replace an existing one that has originated from the House," Nograles said.

Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Rep. Loren Legarda (Lakas, Basilan) said that senators must exercise "statesmanship" over the VAT issue.

"National interest should be the primordial concern of lawmakers," Legarda said.

Rep. Antonio Abaya (Bangsa, Palawan) said that if lawmaking were a game of basketball, the "position of the Senate is to be at the receiving end of a pass from the point."

"The Senate may concur with, improve on, or even propose changes but it cannot instigate revenue measures," Abaya said.

De Venecia said a "strategic compromise" was necessary on the revenue-generation level.

He said the House was "flexible" on the lifting of VAT exemptions.

"What all, we are already making substantive reductions by bringing down the other exempted areas such present," he said.

"I think what we need is a combination of the VAT of 10 plus 2 plus lifting of some of the exemptions with a reduction on the sensitive commodities or goods or products. But power and basic foods like medicines and needles," De Venecia said.

The party-list Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives, which has three sitting representatives in the House, has let the moves to lift the VAT exemptions of the IPPs.

In a position paper, the Apec party-list group said that a 12 percent VAT on power will raise electricity rates by at least 44 centavos per kilowatt-hour.

"Power rates will have a pass on effect on businesses and industries, affecting the bottom line," Apec said.

De Venecia said the House would try to finish the deliberations on the committee report lifting certain VAT exemptions by midnight yesterday or before 4 a.m. today.

He said the idea was to maximize government revenues in order to stabilize public finances, as well as provide as many safety nets as possible for the poor. He said about 40 to 45 products could still be exempt from the tax.

De Venecia said he was confident that the Senate would finally yield to a 12 percent VAT and see the wisdom of retaining the VAT exemptions of certain products and services.

"We will both move toward the center. You know, when there's a fight between between three and anti-three, I always come to produce a synthesis," he said. With a report from Che Ariane Arcadio

Treasury employees protest

OFFICIALS and employees the Bureau of Treasury BTr) staged a rally outside the BTr premises at noon yesterday to protest the third-party outsourcing being forced on the bureau by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Treasurer Noemia Landa, who is about to be replaced by former Cabinet Secretary Cesar Cruz, was said to have lost her position due to her stiff position against the third-party outsourcing.

Under the third-party outsourcing being required by the BSP, the accounts held from the government and private entities will have to be outsourced to accredited consultants to process the debit papers from being only one and one.

So far there are six accredited consultants, namely Bank of the Philippine Islands, Standard Chartered Bank, HSBC, Deutsche Bank, Citibank and the Philippine Dealing System.

Employees said the rally was spurred by news that Landa was going to be replaced due to her efforts to go against the third-party outsourcing.

Michelle V. Romero

Join na TAYO!

KILOSKO!

INQUIRER

Tayo

Calling all youth orgs...
Stand up and be recognized as one of the
Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (TAYO),
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The Search is open to all groups, organizations, clubs & societies whose membership & leadership is composed of at least 15 Filipinos who are 15 to 30 years old.

Orgs shall be judged on the basis of a recent program or project that made an impact on their school, barangay or local community, and which best reflects the efforts of young people as partners in nation-building in any of the following areas: education & capability-building, community development, health & sanitation, environmental protection & conservation, culture & the arts, media & communications, and business, livelihood & entrepreneurship.

Project entries will be based on the following criteria:
- Impact of the project entry to the local community (e.g., improvement in literacy, sanitation, health, income, etc.)
- Social mobilization (e.g., involvement of the community – especially the youth – in planning, implementing and evaluating the program or project)
- Innovativeness (introduction/application of new technologies, uniqueness of service or products, promotion of unique and indigenous ways or materials)
- Sustainability and replicability of duplication

TAYO winners will each receive a grant amounting to P50,000 and specially handcrafted trophies during the awarding ceremonies to be held in Malacanang in April 2005.

Entry forms are available in all NYC, DSWD, local government offices & various schools' Office of Student Affairs, or download forms from www.tayoawards.org and www.youth.net.ph.

For more details, contact: TAYO Secretariat
National Youth Commission
4th Floor, Bookman Building, 373 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City
(02)781-2323, 781-1152, 781-1671
e-mail: tayo@youth.net.ph

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Deadline is extended to
February 28, 2005!

14 doomed convicts get reprieve

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has ignored fresh calls to lift a freeze on capital punishment amid a rising crime rate and granted a reprieve to 14 death row inmates, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

The 14, whose names were withheld, were scheduled to die by lethal injection in May.

But Ms Arroyo, a deeply religious Catholic, approved a recommendation by the justice department that the group be granted a reprieve, Ermita said.

They will be freed today, he said.

The announcement came amid mounting calls from crime watchdogs for Ms Arroyo to lift a moratorium on capital punishment amid high-profile kidnapping.

Just this week, police uncovered a kidnap gang allegedly headed by ex-in-con government, and seized a three-year-old boy after nearly two weeks in captivity.

Former congressman Mitchell Gonzales, also known as Dennis Roldan, is now detained with six other suspects and is also being investigated for kidnapping cases in the past. (See related story)

"For the moment, the president has not considered lifting the moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty," Ermita said.

The Philippines lifted a historically lackadaisical moratorium in 1999 during the term of deposed president Joseph Ejercito Estrada as part of the government's anti-crime drive.

Seven inmates were executed between 1999 and 2000 before Estrada imposed a moratorium on further executions after protests from the politically influential Catholic Church and rights groups.

After a rash of kidnapping and murders in 2003, Ms Arroyo lifted the moratorium and said that the law must be followed to oppose vicious and crime watchdogs. She subsequently reimposed the moratorium.

There are about 1,000 inmates on the death row, 20 of them women. AFP

WITH ₱200M IN FUNDS

Erap's Muslim foundation had 5 scholars in 5 years

By Armando M. Marquez

WITH more than ₱200 million in funds, the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation of jailed ex-President Estrada managed to send to school only five Muslim scholars in the past five years of its existence, it was revealed during testimony at Estrada's plunder trial at the Sandiganbayan yesterday.

Fox Gamlo Reyes, the foundation's treasurer who was presented as a defense witness, said their inability to finance the schooling of deserving Muslims was due to factors beyond their control, including the freezing of the GMEF's funds after it was accused of laundering the bribe that Estrada allegedly received from "Jueteng," the illegal numbers game.

"The organization was to finance for three years and we were not able to meet," said Reyes, an associate professor at the University of the Philippines.

He said the continued operations of the foundation, which was incorporated on Feb. 17, 2000, had been stymied by the medical operation that its then UP vice president Raul de Guzman, had undergone in the United States and the resignation of its treasurer, Isabelo George Go.

Reyes also cited the arrest and incarceration of the foundation's corporate lawyer Edward Serapio, who was accused of laundering the ₱200 million which jueteng operators had allegedly bankrolled into the foundation through those Jose Luis "Chavit" Singson.

He said that after De Guzman recovered from his surgery and Serapio was released, the GMEF resumed operations in 2004.

The scholarship program was to have gone into full blast only last year but failed to do so because it was not able to sign agreements with beneficiary schools in Mindanao, Reyes said.

He said the foundation was able to finance the studies of four Muslim scholars who were taking up nursing courses at the UP and a fourth student at the Philippine Normal University last year.

He said the UP scholars receive ₱10,000 each semester, or ₱20,000 a year.

Reyes said that through the years, and especially in 2003, the foundation has been meeting requests for funding from Muslims in various schools allover the country.

Defense lawyer Cheeto Arzola presented Reyes in court to show that the GMEF was "not a bogus foundation."

But Special Prosecutor Jesus Villa Ignacio did not agree, noting that Reyes had admitted the issue of where the ₱200 million donated to the foundation came from.

Reyes had testified on Monday that Serapio had kept from the other officers the identity of the people who donated the ₱200 million to the foundation in 2000.

"They have no witness to say where the money came from while on the part of the prosecution, we have Singson testifying that the money came from him," Villa Ignacio said.

Reyes dismissed the credibility of Reyes' testimony, noting that he was a scandalous to Estrada and his wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito.

"These are all Erap's people," he said of Reyes and the 19 other witnesses that the defense has so far presented.

HOT RAIDS

Starlet Ana Liz Jorge, a member of the Vivo Hot Babes sexy dance group, shows photos of her with Zambales Rep. Antonio Diaz as proof of their meeting during her filing of a sexual harassment case against the congressman at the House ethics committee. Earlier, she filed a case before the Department of Justice. NEDJ MUNOZ

3 Cabinet members confirmed

DEFENSE Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr., Science and Technology Secretary Estrella Alabastro, and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita finally got the nod of the Commission on Appointments in yesterday's hearings.

The confirmation of Cruz, Alabastro, and Ermita brought to eight the total number of Cabinet officials whose appointments have been approved by the commission.

Previously confirmed were Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Education Secretary Florencio Abad, Agrarian Reform Secretary Rosalio Villa and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Mikey's friendship with Dennis Roldan puts mom on defensive

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo may have been put on the defensive by her legislator son politely supporting former congressman and actor Dennis Roldan who is accused of leading a kidnap gang.

But the President is not about to give Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo a speaking or a licence for expressing disbelief and belittling the achievements of the police which arrested his friend, Roldan, aka Mitchell Gonzales, along with six others at the weekend for the kidnapping of a three-year-old boy.

The President expects the opinion of Congressman Arroyo **just like the opinion of others. That** is his personal opinion and we **have to allow him some leeway to** express his personal opinion," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"My neighbor (Congressman Arroyo) is entitled to his opinion," Bunye said.

As far as the President was concerned, Bunye said the young Arroyo was "free to express his personal opinion on particular issues."

He pointed out that Mikey Arroyo made his statements in his personal capacity and that the media should "leave it at that."

Despite Mikey Arroyo's friendship with Roldan, Bunye said the case would be pursued "subject to the constitutional rights of the accused."

Bunye was evasive when asked if the President has ever tried to straighten out her eldest son who has made a number of public statements that have become an embarrassment to his mother's administration.

Recently, the young Arroyo came out in support of the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes, a position that contradicted the President's campaign against illegal drugs, including marijuana. GIL C. Cabunegan.jr.

Letran High class '81

MEMBERS of San Juan de Letran College high school class of 1981 have been urged to log on to the batch website in preparation for the 2005 Grand Alumni Homecoming which they are hosting.

The website is http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Letran1981 or e-mail to "Letran1981@yahoogroups.com. This early, the batch is already preparing to host the SJLC 2005 Grand Alumni Homecoming. Batch mates can also call their president Lloyd Lao at 9106042.

MASINLOC POWER PLAY

Aussie-RP group seeks funds for winning bid

SINGAPORE—An Australian-Filipino group which won the bidding to buy a major power plant is looking to borrow around $200 million to help fund the half billion-dollar deal, a source familiar with the situation said on Wednesday.

The PNR-Pacific Consortium Inc., composed of local firm VMS Holdings and Australia's Great Pacific Financial Group, submitted the highest bid in December for the 600-MW coal-fired Masinloc plant. As a newcomer, the winning bidder only has to put down 40 percent of the price and can pay the rest within seven years.

"They are approaching various people (the financial institutions) for a loan proposal," the source, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

The consortium has some months from the date of the deal's announcement to pay the cash-strapped Philippine government 40 percent of the acquisition price of $560 million. If they fail to do so, the bidder would lose the $5 million it has put down as downpayment for the asset.

The PNR-Pacific Consortium, which is little known in the power industry, has not yet raised the money because banks are wary about funding the acquisition, the source said.

The Masinloc power station, built at a cost of $500 million in 1998, is a so-called merchant plant that does not hold any long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs) providing revenue guarantees.

The consortium is trying to sign PPAs by itself with electricity users in the Philippines, the source said. Without PPAs, overseas banks would be reluctant to lend because of the high regulatory risks in the Philippine power industry, he added.

If they cannot secure the contracts, they have to fund it via equity. But "who wants to invest in a merchant power project in the Philippines?" he asked.

Industry watchers doubt the consortium would have the financial muscle "itself" to keep the power plant.

According to media reports in the Philippines, the consortium said it was capable of financing the purchase but had not yet decided where the money would come from.

There is little official financial information on Great Pacific Financial Group and Vebb Holdings.

On its website www.gpgroup.com.sg, Great Pacific says it is a property investment company with holdings in real estate of nearly A$2 billion, including mortgages, residential properties, hotels, serviced apartments and infrastructure assets.

Great Pacific in Sydney was not available for comment, while VMS in the Philippines could not be reached for comment.

An official at PSALM, the Philippine power sector privatization office, contacted by telephone said on Jan. 31 that the consortium would have to demonstrate if it failed to meet the deadline for the acquisition in time.

Lecture on Tang dynasty ceramics

JOHN Guy, curator of the Indian and Southeast Asian section of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, will give a lecture on the "Belitung Wreck" of Chinese ceramic underwater treasures on Feb. 28 at 5:30 p.m. at the Filipinas Heritage Library in Makati Avenue.

The Belitung Wreck, rediscovered in a dispatch on the sea off Belitung, Indonesia, in 1998, was part of a huge cargo of eighth-century porcelain that traders from China's Tang dynasty had put aboard an Arab dhow for export to India and what is now Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. It is the only shipwreck to be dated to the Tang period (618-907 AD).

Guy is a guest of the Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines. The lecture is free to members of the society. The fee for non-members is P350 and for students P50.

ROTARY CLUB OF MAKATI METRO • METROBANK FOUNDATION, INC.

TOPS 2004

SEARCH FOR THE OUTSTANDING PHILIPPINE SOLDIERS

Honoring Outstanding Filipinos

THE 10 Outstanding Philippine Soldiers

Ten men, one award. The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers of 2004. A tribute to heroism, gallantry, dedication and integrity in the Armed Force of the Philippines.

From the kitchenette of Jolo to the dental dispensary at Villamor Air Base, these exemplary men of the Armed Forces have each made their mark as soldiers. More than overpowering strongholds of insurgency or keeping enemies of the state at bay, these outstanding soldiers have helped win the war against poverty, indifference and mediocrity. Just as importantly, their excellent service records should help bring back the pride and honor among our men and women in uniform.

Once again, the Rotary Club of Makati-Metro and the Metrobank Foundation congratulate this year's winners in the annual search for The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers. In recognizing their achievements and contributions, we hope to inspire their peers and the rest of us with models to emulate.

ROTARY CLUB OF MAKATI METRO

METROBANK FOUNDATION, INC.

In Cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, February 24, 2005
Ash Wednesday

1st Reading: Jer 17:5-10
Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said to his disciples, "There was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and feasted every day in his gate lay Lazarus, a poor man covered with sores, who longed to eat just the scraps falling from the rich man's table. Even dogs used to come and lick his sores. It happened that the poor man died and angels carried him to take his place with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. From hell where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham afar off, and with him Lazarus at rest.

He called out: 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus with the tip of his finger dipped in water to cool my tongue, for I suffer as much in this fire.'

Abraham replied: 'My son, remember that in your lifetime you were well-off while the lot of Lazarus was tribulation. Now he is in comfort and you are in agony. But that is not all. Between your place and ours a great chasm has been fixed, so that no one can cross over from here to you or from your side to us.'

The rich man implored: 'Then I beg you, Father Abraham, to send Lazarus to my father's house where my five brothers live. Let him warn them so that they may not end up in this place of torment.' Abraham replied: 'They have Moses and the prophets: let them listen to them.' But the rich man said: 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

Abraham said: 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the grave.'

Commentary

We must cross as God, and be like every pioneer by running away to the Word of God and the Spirit to the community that wants the Word together. We must have no fear and bear fruit no matter the weather. Our bread our labor as and bread our labor bread will judge us each individually according to our deeds. Jesus tells the story of Lazarus (the rich man) and Lazarus, the beggar, treated worse than the dogs at his gate. And today most is wanted. Abraham, the father of faith takes Lazarus in his bosom and Dives is left to suffer in agony. Even when Dives wants Lazarus as a servant to cool his pain, or go tell his brothers and save them that the chasm is fixed now—it was a gap outside a house on earth. We are warned: we must obey the law and the prophets and care for the poor, the widow and orphan. We don't need the messenger or we need one to be able to hear the Word of Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead. Jesus, help us listen and obey your word of good news to the poor and hold our outside our gates even and the lazarus for the majority who are our own which we see. Jesus we ask but as one that it is the poor who call us to compassion and mercy. Amen.

(Jesuits Philippines Inc., February 8, 1995 Sgt. Pilipino, Quezon City, 1100 Tel. 4 Olympia, 721 Quezon City, Tel. 721 3906, Fax: 721-7420 E-mail: info@jesuits.ph, Website: http://www.jesuits.ph/ Fr. Francisco Bulaquena Jr. / 4 Sgt. Pilipino, Quezon City, 1100 Philippines)

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CRIMINAL LAW; CRIMINAL PROCEDURE—Verbal order of dismissal is a nullity—Section 1, Rule 120 of the Revised Rules of Criminal Procedure, mandates that a judgment must be written in the official language, personally and directly prepared by the judge and signed by him and shall contain clearly and distinctly a statement of the facts and the law upon which it is based. The rule applies to a final order dismissing a criminal case grounded on the violation of the rights of the accused to a speedy trial. A verbal judgment or order of dismissal is a violation of the provisions, hence, such order is, in contemplation of law, not in case, therefore, ineffective. Another State failed to issue a written resolution dismissing the criminal cases for failure of the prosecution to submit its report on the determination of the cases within the sixty-day period fixed by the grant court. Moreover, the verbal order was rejected by majority vote of the members of the Sandiganbayan Special Division. In fine, there has been no valid and effective order of dismissal of the cases. The Sandiganbayan cannot then be faulted for issuing the assailed resolution. (Citations omitted.) Cimeles Gallego, Jr., Second Division, Center v. Sandiganbayan, G. R. No. 162214, November 11, 2004.)

By B. R. Uson

Old boxer's final round wins forgiveness

From page A1

for a better life," said Cordova, who is now based in Victoria, Australia.

He said he would bring Josie back to Manila to meet her mother Mercedes, whom she has not seen for 29 years.

Josie is the only daughter among three siblings. Her brothers, Wilmer and Wilfredo, are now in their 40s.

Career path

Cordova said he had been a "bad boy" for leaving his family in the Philippines when he went to Australia to pursue a boxing career.

He began fighting professionally on April 12, 1961, knocking out his opponent at the Araneta Coliseum in Manila, according to boxrec.com website. He later fought in Davao, Cebu and Bacolod cities, rising to become the top contender for the Philippine bantamweight title.

Cordova fought twice in Tokyo in 1969, but lost both bouts.

It was in early 1970 when he left his wife and children in Sagay City, 82 km northeast of the city to continue boxing in Melbourne, Australia. At that time, Josie was only 2 years old.

Losing streak

After winning only once in his last nine professional fights as a featherweight boxer in Australia and New Zealand, Cordova finally hung up his gloves with a record of 23 fights, including seven wins, 12 losses and three draws, according to boxrec.com.

Cordova worked as a machine operator in a factory in Victoria, Australia, and it now retired. He married a Filipina teacher, Yolanda Castillo, with whom he has two sons, Wilfred and Reynard.

Cordova said he had been sending money regularly to his wife and children through his family, but Mercedes had not received any amount.

Lacking financial support, Mercedes decided to leave Sagay and look for a job in Manila. She left her three children in the care of a sister, Thelma, in Barangay Lopez Jaena, Sagay. Josie was only 5 then.

Thelma later died and the three children were brought to different relatives.

When she was 11, Josie ran away from home and lived on the streets, alone and hungry. Things would even urinate on her as she lay on the sidewalk.

Good Samaritan

A kind-hearted resident of Bacolod, Angelie Maloney, took pity on Josie and asked her to live with her. Eventually, Josie found a job as a houseboy.

Maloney noted that Josie was not comfortable with men and appeared to have gone through a lot of bad experiences.

Josie said that she had been working in different homes, taking care of children, doing the laundry or cleaning.

She said she had learned to survive on her own and was resigned to the fact that her parents had left her to fend for herself.

Conscience-stricken

A near-death experience in 1993 caused by ulcers prompted Cordova to seek out the family he left in the Philippines.

"In 1 was praying in my room, I felt the presence of the Virgin Mary and I could smell the scent of roses, and I realized that I had to find my family in the Philippines to make things right," he said.

The old boxer went back to the Philippines and found Mercedes and the boys in Manila. He bought her a house and gave the boys a jeepney they could use for business.

He said he had heard all kinds of stories about what had become of Josie, including one that she had died. But when he prayed, he said he could hear his daughter's voice from a distance, which he took as a sign that she was still alive.

"When one prays and asks for forgiveness, so he can make his life right, those prayers are answered," Cordova said.

Cordova had been coming to the Philippines several times in search for Josie. In January, he went to Sagay. Occidental after he heard reports that she was there.

On Monday he met with Gov. Joseph Ganaden to seek his help. The governor was once mayor of Sagay when the Cordovas used to live.

"I help me find my daughter. I need to seek her forgiveness," he said. "I will not have peace of mind until I find her."

Media help

His appeal was picked up by local media. Friends of Fely Cariedo, Josie's employer, heard about Cordova's search and called up radio dyRL. The station, in turn, informed Cordova about Josie's whereabouts in Bacolod.

Cordova and Wilmer went to Cariedo's house on Lizares Extension to see Josie.

When he saw his daughter, Cordova dropped to his knees. "I cried and knelt in front of my daughter and told her I did not want to leave her if she did not want to come," he said.

He told Josie that he blamed himself for leaving her and asked her for forgiveness and a chance to make things right for her.

At first, Josie admitted that she did not want to go with the fathers she barely knew.

"I have become so used to taking care of myself. I know how my parents look like but I barely know them," she said.

But after seeing her father pleading for forgiveness, Josie's heart softened. She said she finally accepted the fact that she still had a family and was thankful to God for this.

Perhaps, she said, she would now feel the love of the parents she had lost as the one they too younger remember what it was like having them.

In the afternoon, father and daughter went to the house of Mercedes' cousin, Andrea de Guzmán, at Villa Angela subdivision here.

Tears of joy

Andrea called Mercedes in Manila and told her that they did not find. Josie but someone who knew her daughter would speak to her. Mercedes was crying when her daughter got on the phone.

When she told her that she was Josie, Mercedes' voice became tears of joy.

Yesterday, the Cordovas went to Barangay Lopez Jaena in Sagay to visit relatives and to attend a thanksgiving Mass for Josie's return.

The boxer said he would now atone the heavens with prayers, this time to thank God for giving him back Josie.

RITES of remembrance of the liberation of the Los Baños POW camp which imprisoned civilians and soldiers during WW2 inside the Baker Hall, a gym-turned-internment camp inside the Philippine Agricultural College, now the UP Los Baños. They were liberated by Filipino guerrillas on Feb.21, 1945. —NOY JAVIER

Cops arrest 4 more for Makati blast

By Tonyo Cruz

Delfin said the Inquirer that Maldon was a key part of the terrorist effort coordinated by the JI.

According to Delfin, Maldon is believed to be keeping at least three kilos of the explosive TNT that the JI is supposedly intending to use in bomb attacks in Metro Manila.

The cache is part of an estimated 100 kilos of TNT that the group had shipped to Metro in Doña Xalmadeña City twice than two years ago, Delfin said.

He said police intelligence operatives managed to confiscate the kilos during a series of raids but continue to which four suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf were arrested.

Delfin said among the four was "Gomes," who was allegedly part of the Abu Sayyaf "cell" that planned and carried out the bombing of SuperFerry 14 in February last year. He is detained at the PNP national center in Camp Crame.

Face to face

Military sources said the four, dry-turned state witnesses had a "face to face" meeting with the Iranian and Trinidad bin Ibrahim at Camp Aguinaldo, and that they talked in their native tongue.

Witness showed reporters a list of wanted Abu Sayyaf members from the US Department of Justice and the Philippine government, which includes Gomes and a younger looking Ibrahim.

He said the two men were the subject of a warrant of arrest issued by Branch Judge Danilo Basay for their supposed involvement in the Abu Sayyaf raid on the Dipadun resort in Mabuhay in 2000, which led to the abduction of 21 persons, mostly European tourists.

Ibrahim was turned in the warrant, and the two state witnesses identified Trinidad as one of the John Does.

Witness referred Ibrahim and Trinidad the secretary of a public attorney but they refused, saying they would have their own lawyer.

He told them that they had 72 days on the common detention, and that they would have to remain in government custody because of the outstanding warrant issued on Oct. 7, 2004.

'It's there'

An request for Ibrahim's supposed illegal possession of firearms and explosives was also held at the DOJ. Witness said the case would probably be filed today in the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court.

The 28-year-old conductor of the MGM line had positively identified Ibrahim and Trinidad as the two men who initiated in getting off before the bomb exploded.

While he did not notice any of the two carrying a package into the bus, the conductor said he remembered them because he had thought they were holding guns.

"It's there. I noticed them because I thought they have each other. They boarded the bus together, but they are apart. Kunuan na sinabot to yun (I could really wear it)," the conductor had said.

When asked by reporters to comment on the charges against them, only Trinidad spoke.

He said he wanted his family "who are still looking for [me]" to get in touch with him so that he could have a lawyer.

Keeping blood marks on Ibrahim's forehead and on Trinidad's nape, reporters asked them if they had been tortured.

Ibrahim hinted that they were roughed up somewhat, moving the tip of his forehead at each show his thumb.

Follow-up operations

The base for Maldon also Ibrahim continues after a raid on his supposed hideout in Tagaig City on Tuesday proved fruitless.

Lt. Col. Bienvenido Patrick, chief of the Armed Forces' public information office, refused to say where the follow-up operations were being conducted so as not to compromise the efforts of the intelligence service of the AFP.

He said the operations were being coordinated with the PNP.

"We are working down the trail of the explosives, who is Maldon alias Nepis. Personal raid operations. "Right now, with the cooperation of the two suspects (Ibrahim and Trinidad) and in coordination with the police, lady operatives are continuing with their operation to [find him]."

Alarmist text messages

Pascual dismissed text messages being passed around that a plot was afoot to bombs mall and an apartment building in Makati and a department store in Manila. The text messages said a military intelligence officer had confirmed the supposed plot.

"What we need now are the vigilance and alertness of our countrymen down to the barangay level," he said, adding:

"What we need is for us to be vigilant because these (mails) are [the arrested] sub-targets. But if we have effective security guards, they are going to have difficulty in bringing bombs inside." With a report from Michele Rogas

Lawyer mistah sues Ombudsman over GMA graft case

By Armand N. Macam

A LAWYER claiming to be a key player in the Nifas uprising of February 1986 yesterday filed an administrative complaint against Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and his deputies and accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of corruption.

Mariano R. Santiago, who claimed to have been "an active participant in the takeover of PTV Channel 4 (now ABS-CBN)" during Edsa I said that various Ombudsman's actions on the graft case he had filed against the President, he call on the people to fight graft would always be held in doubt.

He said the people were "disgusted" with Mrs Arroyo's "hypocritical announcement of her call to fight corruption because she and the members of her Cabinet must be cleared of corruption [themselves]."

Santiago, a former head of the defense forces of Lord Dante partisan and a 1967 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, filed the administrative complaint against Marcelo a day after his lawyer mobilized the public to fight graft, saying it was "the legacy of Edsa."

Last year, Santiago filed a graft complaint against the President and members of her Cabinet for allegedly using P1.6 billion of the Road User's Tax (RUT) for the production of big billboards for her election campaign.

Among other statements on corruption in the complaint were former Public Works Secretary Hernando Iscalante, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin.

In his 5-page complaint dated March 24, 2004, Santiago said the alleged use of the RUT was illegal because the tax was to be used "solely for the maintenance of roads and drainage, installation of efficient and adequate traffic lights and road safety devices, and air pollution control."

Now, after almost a year, Santiago said he had yet to receive a word from the Ombudsman.

He said this inaction violated the constitutional provision stipulating that the assigned office should "act promptly" on complaints.

Moreover, the Code of Conduct of Public Officials states that the Ombudsman and his deputies decide act within 15 days on any documents brought before them, he said.

No end to corruption

"Unless the respondents prove their constitutional duty to act after graft in government, especially the high and the mighty led by Ms Arroyo, the people shall continue to lose faith in the government and there will be no end to the rampant corruption in the sadly-mapped government," Santiago said in his complaint.

He urged Marcelo "not to betray public trust simply because he is an appointee of the President."

Before the Ombudsman acts on his complaint, the government will be hard put to ask the people to pay more taxes, including the value-added tax, "to replenish the cash illegally disbursed during the elections," he said.

Santiago also called on Marcelo to "administratively sanction himself and/or his deputies for this obviously deliberate clubbing of a very high profile complaint, to the prejudice of the complainant and all taxpayers."

Lack of lawyers

Contacted by the Inquirer for comment, Marcelo promised to look into Santiago's complaint.

He attributed the seeming inaction of the Office of the Ombudsman to its lack of "adequate lawyers."

"[Damage] done here is usual that we are severely under-staffed," Marcelo said. He said his office had only 58 lawyers attending to thousands of graft cases.

Marcelo said that in 2004 alone, 13,000 graft cases were filed before the Office of the Ombudsman.

He said Santiago should help them lobby in Congress for more lawyers, investigators and key personnel. As it is, they are already working hard to make up for the lack of personnel, he said.

"I'm the sole cylinder—I work seven days a week or at a minimum of 18 hours a week," said Marcelo, who is known to stay in his office past midnight and who reports for work even on weekends.

Edsa began with Ninoy Aquino

By Tonyo Cruz

the Manila international airport on Aug. 21, 1983. The airport has since been renamed in his honor.

Commissioned by the Ninoy Aquino Memorial Foundation, the statue was first brought to the United States where it was unveiled and blessed by Msr. St. Joseph Pinto in New York.

Moving from site to site

On Sept. 4, 1984, the statue was brought to Manila by Dr. Alejandro Neves in time for the first death anniversary of Aquino. But the ceremony held at the Bureau of Customs for days, prompting protests from followers and admirers of the fallen opposition leader.

Businessman Jose Antonio Gonzales then took the statue and had it installed in his building, the Mondragon Building along Roxas Boulevard.

In August 1995, Gonzales donated the statue to the City of Manila through Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim.

In February 2000, Manila Mayor Lim thereafter donated the statue to the Ninoy Aquino Foundation, which started creating for a permanent and fitting venue for the statue.

Castrillo

It spent at the back of the People Power Monument was initially chosen. "But it looked better where Ninoy had just been shot: in front of Manila.

It was on Aug. 21, 1983 that Erin and her family... as well as all Filipinos the world over—still remember tragically.

The average Filipino felt once the news falling of the No. 1 Marcos opponentnia Ninoy Aquino was announced.

Filipinos had powerfully united by five thousand Marcos' declaration of martial law in 1972 and allowed him to follow what he declared was a program toward a New Society.

Millions at funeral

But the falling toppled the entire Marcosian dream and millions turned out to attend Ninoy's funeral from Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City to the Manila Memorial Park cemetery.

The Marcos media put little attention to the funeral, which approved the people more. So when Mr & Ms Magazine came out with a special issue on the funeral, they sold out and brought half a million copies and we managed the weekly publication of Mr & Ms. Special Edition to document all the demonstrations against Marcos for the next three years.

In late 1985, the Agrava Commission that investigated the 19 may falling recommend Marcos' resignation, Gen. Fabian Ver, Marcos' chief of staff, and the holding of a national presidential election to be held on feb. 12, 1986.

With the opposition's fielding of Ninoy's widow Cory supported only by the so-called Cry Democracy movement, "mosaic press," the need for another daily newspaper (aside from Ian Bunger Malaya) was filled by the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Marcos cheated

Marcos (Ferdinand) of course, that after he attempted his victory Cory contested strike because of the Marcos' cheating, Bulletin, Daily Inquirer and Malaya had to be closed down by Gen Miguel and Bonifacio.

The Inquirer was said to so may when Marcos discovered a plot to seize Malacañang by Juan Ponce Enrile (an defense secretary) to use the implementation of martial law in its early days) and Enrile's security chief Lt. Col. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan.

Anticipating that scenario, Enrile and Honasan notified the local and would press, then with Sen. Fidel Ramos (Marcos' cousin but an opposer). They all barricaded themselves at Camp Aguinaldo.

Civilian support

With Jaime Cardinal Sin sounding the call in support them, civilians, nuns and priests gathered by the millions at Edsa near the camp and all the way to Magsaysay to relay for four days and nights, starting Feb. 22.

Which Marcos finally sent military units to subdue them, the people ground them with flowers, rosaries and religious images.

The units turned back and the people surged all the way to Malacañang. There, on the night of Feb. 26, Marcos abandoned his post and left for Hawaii in Hawaii with his family where he stayed in exile until his death.

Today is the 19th anniversary of that victory of the Filipino people over tyranny—the anniversary of People Power.

Definitive history

A group was formed in 1986 to make sure that we do not forget Edsa 1. Calling itself the Foundation for World wide People Power, its first project was to publish a definitive history, a blow by blow account of the four days of Edsa1.

This is now out of print but preparations are being made to reprint enough copies at popular prices for the coming 20th anniversary of Edsa 1 in 2006.

The whole book has four chapters, one for each of the four Edsa days, an hour by hour, moment-to-moment narration by Angelo Israel Santiago. It puts together reports from 12 books and 14 individuals.

This "Chronology of a Revolution" has yet to be outdone in objectivity and comprehensiveness. (A short time later, the PEPWOW commissioned Angelo Israel Santiago to rewrite "Chronology" in Filipino, which was later published as "Himagsikan sa Edsa.")

To start with "Chronology of a Revolution," the PEPWOW asked 10 scholarly writers—each one as profiently in his field—to assess what had happened a decade since.

Scholarly writers

The writers are Jose E Abueva (A Global Perspective), Belinda A. Aquino (Politics and Government), Alunada Dionisia (Foreign Policy), Felipe Miranda (The Military), Ma. Teresa Dolina (Peace and Human Rights), Rigoberto Tiglao (The Economy), Ma. Cynthia Rothan Rodrigo (Quality of Life), Fr. John J. Carroll (Church and State), Melinda Quintos de Jesus (The Media) and Joel Rocamora (A Personal Note).

Lorna Kalaw Tirol edited this companion piece titled "Looking Back, Looking Forward."

Aside from the two volumes set, the PEPWOW has also published Gonzalo de Quiroz' "Dead Ends: Four Moves Andmarked Philippine Democracy" here, the selected and massive colonial records to shed light on Marcos planned martial law.

The PEPWOW has likewise produced two video documentaries: the multi-awarded "Batas Militar" and "Lakas Ng Sambayanan." "Batas Militar" was also produced and directed by Kara Magsanoc-Alegre, who wrote the script, by the late Lito Tiongson, was a ground-breaking feature-length video on martial law.

"Lakas Ng Sambayanan" chronicles the emergence of People Power throughout Philippine history. The script was written by Jean "Bee" C Lacaba and directed by noted documentarist Edmundo "Bodet" Reboton. A "Lakas Ng Sambayanan" is nominated on screen by award-winning actor Cesar Montano.

Unfortunately, in 1986 Filipinos clinched a movie star President Joseph Estrada, who turned out to be an alcoholic, a gambler, a womanizer and/or for Malacañang.

It took three years to oust Marcos. It took only three months to oust Estrada.

More of the same

Edsa 3 is still fresh in the mind of the reader to make it unnecessary to repeat here.

But the two Edsas are the same. A real change in the hearts and minds of the citizenry is not to be found.

Why is this so? How come the country's problems remain unchanged, if they have not gotten worse? An attempt at analysis and a solution shall be made in succeeding.

HIGHLIGHT of triumph for Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos on the eve of the Marcosian' flight out of the country on Feb. 24, 1986.

PHOTO FROM THE BOOK EDSA 20 YEARS

2 Edsas the same: No real change of heart and mind

Look who's talking about …

From page A1

In, nonetheless to be lifting

A "clique" of "puppet-minded soldiers" has abused characters leaders of the UNO treating them as political tools as if they were members of a "street gang," accordingly the daughter of the late former President Ferdinand Marcos.

"Things are not good and getting worse by the day," she said in a strongly worded statement written on her signature pink paper stationery.

When sought for comment, Marcos refused to identify the members of the UNO who have owned her ire.

"Ayaw kong ito, But I'm not based with the opposition. There's no more direction," Marcos told in a phone interview.

Informed about Marcos' statement, House Minority Leader Rep. Francis Escudero (MPC, Sorsogon) declined to comment on what's ruling Marcos.

"Wala I have the highest regard

MARCOS: Bored with the opposition

for her, opposition members should avoid making statement like that in public because then are not helping the opposition," Escudero said.

Committee of five

Escudero earlier said the UNO was being led by a committee of five, which includes him, former

ESCUDERO: We're voting out here

President Joseph Estrada, Rosario "Boy" Morales, Bishop Mario Jeronimo Bautz and former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan.

It didn't sit well with Marcos that she was not included in Escudero's enumeration of UNO leaders, according to the opposition proponent.

In her statement, Marcos said: "The five people who have stood out themselves to be leaders of the UNO are heading the group like it's a street gang."

Pressed whether the opposition was in "total disarray" as Marcos claimed, Escudero said: "Not true. We're trying our best."

Marcos pointed to a "prevailing demoralization" inside the opposition.

"Bitterness brought by struggling the opposition were hopeless because of a clique manipulating things inside the UNO," she said.

Ignoring other groups

Marcos said the clique was "ignoring other groups" and its members were "content (with) controlling the foundation of their own party (UNO)."

"Even old allies are shunned if perceived to be a threat to their self interests," she said.

"I just hope the gangster-minded soldiers in the UNO will shape up or if not or better yet, take their acts somewhere else," she added.

HIT THE PARK: President Aquino with actress-dancer Jasmin Figuero who was a call center in Eastwood City. Libis to applaud the job-generating contribution of the call center industry to the economy. [illegible]

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gonzo

UN: World in danger of bird flu pandemic

HO CHI MINH CITY—The world is overdue on influenza pandemics and it must act swiftly to prevent one being triggered by bird flu now endemic in parts of Asia where it has killed 46 people, UN officials said on Wednesday.

The world usually had a flu pandemic every 20 or 30 years, but it has been 40 since the last one.

"The world is now in the gravest possible danger of a pandemic," Shigeo Omi, the head of the World Health Organization in Asia, said at a bird-flu conference in Vietnam, the country hardest hit by the H5N1 virus.

Omi said it was "highly likely" the bird flu virus that swept through large parts of Asia from the end of 2003 would be the source of the new one, unless concerted action was taken.

Joseph Domenech of the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization called on rich countries to do more.

"If they don't do more, sooner or later the problem could appear in their place," he told reporters in Ho Chi Minh City, home to 10 million people and close to the Mekong river delta where Vietnam's latest outbreak began in December.

"The bird is a robber rider," he said.

The latest outbreak in Vietnam has killed 15 people. All, like earlier victims, appear to have contracted it from direct contact with sick birds.

But what these experts fear is the H5N1 virus could get into a human or animal host with a human flu virus and another bird or swine flu virus and mutate into a strain that could sweep through a world population with no immunity and kill millions.

At the first bird flu summit in Bangkok last year, experts spoke confidently about containing the virus.

They now say it could take many years to eliminate and a large effort is needed just to contain a disease that has jumped to a range of animals including cows, leopards and now flies.

Omi said Tuesday's news that Japanese researchers had found flies infected with bird flu last year showed the virus was "versatile and resilient."

The conference, which ends on Friday, will review how Asia prepares against the

MORE, PAGE A7

NATURE'S WRATH: The village of Hoktaran, some 40 km from the city of Zarand in Iran, was devastated by a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5. The quake flattened villages in the mountains of central Iran, killing at least 370 people and injuring hundreds. AP

Lebanon rejects calls for Syrian withdrawal

BEIRUT—Lebanon dismissed Tuesday an EU-US call for Syrian troops to leave the country immediately, while the opposition appealed to the world community to make concrete action to have it pulled out.

As Lebanon's judiciary launched an inquiry into the assassination of ex-premier Rafiq Hariri, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Hammoud said the international call for an immediate Syrian withdrawal was "nothing new."

US President George W. Bush and EU leaders have demanded the immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

With the pressure building on the pro-Damascus regime in Saad Hariri's killing, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said there was a "high level of suspicion" that Syria was involved and urged an independent investigation.

But Hammoud point-blank refused to discuss an EU demand for an international inquiry into Hariri's killing, when questioned by reporters Tuesday.

Instead, he stressed that the Lebanese judicial authorities "were looking." The investigation, to which the UN Security Council had appointed an international committee to assist.

Since Hariri's murder eight days ago, the opposition has been riding a huge wave of popular support by its campaign to end Syria's political influence and for a withdrawal of its troops stationed on Lebanese soil for almost 30 years.

"Lebanon has been taken hostage... by a regime Lebanese regime backed by the Syrians," leading opposition figure Dorgan MP Walid Jumblatt told the French newspaper 20 Minutes.

"In Ukraine, could take years, and we cannot choose a second one."

"In the international community is really exerting pressure on Syria? I do not feel confident," he said, echoing fears among the opposition that no tangible steps have yet been taken against Syria for its rule-rattling warnings. AFP

British queen won't attend Charles-Camilla wedding

LONDON—Queen Elizabeth II has announced she would not attend the April 9 civil wedding of her son, Prince Charles, to his longtime companion Camilla Parker Bowles.

"The queen will not be attending the civil ceremony because she is aware that the prince and Mrs. Parker Bowles wanted to keep the ceremony low-key," said a spokesperson for Buckingham Palace on Sunday.

The palace said the British royals would, however attend a religious blessing and prayer service after the wedding, led by the head of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

"The queen and the rest of the royal family will, of course, be going to the service of dedication at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle," the statement continued.

The announcement in the latest blow to a wedding ceremony that has already faced a series of setbacks since it was announced on Feb. 10.

Also Saturday, declared the queen's decision to stay away "unprecedented," while royal photographer Arthur Edwards dubbed it "another snub" against the prince.

"The one thing (Charles) wanted was to get this wedding over and done with so that Parker Bowles could move in," he added. Now it seems he's one another is enabling him and his wedding. It just seems to go on and I just wonder what end is going to be the couple," Edwards said.

But a palace spokesperson stressed this was not an snub by the queen, whose recent public backing for the union between her son and his lover has helped warm the public to the match.

Parker Bowles was widely seen as a major cause of the breakup of Charles' first marriage to the late Princess Diana, who died in a car crash in 1997 but has remained hugely popular.

"The queen is attending the service of dedication and paying for the reception—this is not a snub," the spokesperson said.

Clarence House, her official residence of Prince Charles, said the couple was "happy with the decision."

Charles' sons from his marriage to the late Princess Diana—Prince William and Prince Harry—as well as Parker Bowles' children from her prior marriage, Tom and Laura, are still expected to attend the Windsor town hall ceremony.

But the Daily Mirror tabloid reported Wednesday that Charles' father Prince Philip, his brothers princes Andrew and Edward and sister Princess Anne also would stay away.

Charles, 56, and Parker Bowles, 57, who have known each other for more than 30 years and dated on and off, convert many in a church ceremony because they have both previously married and been divorced.

Initial plans called for a civil ceremony to be held inside Windsor Castle, one of the queen's residences west of London, but there had to be an appeal because the venue is unlicensed.

Since forming the plans for a civil wedding would have also made the royal couple "unjustifiably accessible", for three years, to other British couples who want to marry there, the couple moved down the road to the town hall.

But the queen finds the Guildhall too "inconvenient," according to a close source to the family quoted in The Sun tabloid. AFP

QUEEN Elizabeth II (June 2, 2003 photo with Prince Charles) during a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the Queen's coronation at Westminster Abbey in London. AFP/File

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Shiite leader poised to become Iraqi PM

BAGHDAD—The head of a Shiite religious party with links to Iran was poised to become Iraq's prime minister as US President George W. Bush won European backing for a Sunni-training mission in Iraq.

Ibrahim Jaafari was picked Tuesday as coordinator of the United Iraqi Alliance for that swept to victory in January elections, ousting the Iraq-approved Shiite minister's rise to power and the decline of the Sunni minority that dominated under Saddam.

Jaafari, a Sharia-old doctor and currently one of two vice presidents, must now be approved by parliament. But with 140 seats in the 275-seat new assembly the UIA choice is unlikely to be rejected.

His nomination after a meeting of the Shiite bloc parties came after Ahmed Chalabi, a controversial secular politician and erstwhile Pentagon favorite, withdrew from the race.

Jaafari's nomination said that an prime minister he would under nothing security in the stabilizing country his priority, pointing the finger at Iraq's neighbors.

"We will make with security because it's a problem that goes to neighbors," he said, adding that "interference by neighboring countries in the circle of security must be ended."

Both Iran, whose leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has backed Jaafari, and Syria have been accused of involvement in Iraqi insurgency, charges the two countries vehemently deny.

Jaafari's Hezb al-Dawa (Islamic Call Party) quickly established itself in the southern Shiite heartland after the March 2003 US-led invasion that ousted Saddam.

Dawa, the oldest Shiite party in Iraq, advocates Shiitism reform and modernizing religious institutions, while enjoying the prestige of its past resistance to Saddam's regime.

Its members started carrying out attacks against Baath officials in the 1970s and fully embarked on an armed struggle in the early 1980s, when Jaafari fled to Iran before moving to London in 1984.

Baathist parties, who some 75 parliamentary seats in last month's vote, have said they would support the Shiite candidate for prime minister in return for its supporting their candidate for the presidency. AFP

AMID PROTESTS

Britain unveils tough antiterror legislation

LONDON—Britain's interior minister unveiled a tough antiterror bill Thursday amid fears that grave threats of attack justified such a radical move despite nondemonstration from opposition parties and rights advocates.

The proposals give Home Secretary Charles Clarke the potential to put foreign and domestic terrorist suspects under indefinite house arrest on his sole authority.

But to wield such power, Clarke would first have to issue an order to opt out of a clause in the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been incorporated into British law.

Presenting the Prevention of Terrorism Bill to parliament, the minister argued that the unprecedented power was justified because Britain faced unprecedented threats.

"Let no one be of any doubt that there are terrorists here and abroad who want to attack the United Kingdom and its interests," he said.

People who felt that an attack like the Sept. 11 strike had happened Britain had a view that was "short-sighted, complacent, ignorant of the facts and journalistically reckless to disregard (the safety) of this country," Clarke continued.

Underscoring the risk of attack, the government released four papers that outlined a series of thwarted terror plots and warned of further dangers.

The plots uncovered included attempts of a "bad threat to British people and British interests" from terrorists affiliated with al-Qaida, said one of the documents.

The Prevention of Terrorism Bill would take enable the home secretary to issue two stringent orders that freeze arrest, curb or banning someone from using a computer or mobile phone or restrict movement, but the person affected would have the right to appeal to a judge.

Britain is currently holding 10 foreign suspects suspected of terrorism who have not been charged, and they are more likely to be freed in March. Two others have been released on bail in recent weeks, with one of them placed under house arrest.

The draft legislation applied major variations, not only for enhancing but also because Clarke announced he hoped to rush it through the House of Commons in just two days—underlying time for parliamentary debate.

The opposition Conservative interior affairs spokesperson, David Davis, said that although the two orders facing Britain were so severe it did not violate such an infringement on individual rights.

"You are planning to use these extraordinary, long-standing powers of British liberty and justice (on a case) which may not be evidence that we prefer," Davis said.

The Conservatives and the opposition Liberal Democrats made a rare show of proposing a joint amendment later on Tuesday to try to kill the draft law by suspending further debate.

They said the law gave to the executive "powers that should be exercised by the judiciary" and "wrongly enlarges the right to liberty of the individual."

Amnesty International UK director Kate Allen slammed the moves as "marking short of jettisoning of liberty."

"Today's details cannot mitigate the version of the new bill—the home secretary has removed the power to place anyone in the United Kingdom under house arrest without charge or trial, based on secret evidence," she said.

But junior Home Office minister Hazel Blears, speaking on BBC television, argued that Britain needed the law because it "faced a significantly different threat from anything we've faced before... to the nature of the terrorist threat changes, we the have to change and adapt." AFP

Palestinian parliament to vote on new Cabinet to end crisis

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei presents a revamped government for to parliament for endorsement on Wednesday in an effort to end a crisis that had threatened his job.

Qurei agreed to make sweeping changes to his new Cabinet after it became apparent he would not win approval for the line-up he presented on Monday to a parliament demanding more reformers and fewer members of Yasser Arafat's old guard.

The new list may make it easier for President Mahmoud Abbas to press ahead with a promised overhaul of the Palestinian leadership in his painstaking efforts with Israel.

In survey by lawmakers demanding a more significant move away from the corrupt-linked image of the late president Arafat's customary-favored Qurei to postpone the parliamentary vote by two days.

Abbas and a younger generation of prominent legislators in his and Qurei's Fatah faction had tried in recent weeks to persuade Qurei to include more non-Arafat reformers in the new Cabinet.

Fatah's Nabil Shaath, Mohammed Dahlan—Abbas loyalists chosen to take him implement his program to reform the Palestinian Authority and its security services—would take posts in the new government as Abbas had hoped, officials said.

Abbas is under pressure from the United States and other international donors to revamp security forces from other competing security forces.

Qurei was still expected to retain some of his original choices, including Arafat loyalists such as Nabil Shaath, tipped to become deputy prime minister, and Saeb Erekat, a top spokesperson.

"Mr Abu Ala(Qurei) agreed to present a new government... and this is an achievement for the Palestinian Legislative Council," Fatah lawmaker Hakem Abdel-Qadir said.

In Gaza, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed wing of Fatah that has been linked to attacks on Israelis, urged Abbas to sack Qurei, who was appointed by Arafat in 2003.

Prospects for promoting have heightened since Abbas succeeded Arafat late month as a platform of non-violence, and persuaded militants to abide by a de facto truce. Reuters

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Tutu: Nearly 50M babies born every year have no identity

UNITED NATIONS—Archbishop Desmond Tutu launched a global campaign Tuesday to record the birth of every child, saying nearly 50 million babies born every year are not registered and thus have no official identity and often barred from education or health care.

"It is, in a very real sense, a matter of life and death," the South African Nobel Peace Prize winner said. "The unregistered child is a nonentity. The unregistered child does not exist. How can we live with the knowledge that we could have made a difference?"

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child proposed an obligation on countries to register every child immediately after birth. Eleven years later, every country in the world has ratified the convention except the United States and Somalia.

But according to the latest figures from the UN Children's Fund, over 48 million births each year—36 percent of births worldwide—are not registered, the vast majority in developing countries.

The British aid agency Plan, which released a 30-page report titled "Birth Registration—a Universal Responsibility" to coincide with the campaign, said it is impossible to know how many unregistered children there are because they cannot be counted. But it said best estimates put the overall, worldwide number at more than 500 million.

Tutu told a news conference that a birth document "proves who you are," and without one children and adults are often barred from education, health care, citizenship and the right to vote.

"Governments worldwide are failing the world's children, as millions of youngsters without a birth certificate find it very difficult to prove their age or nationality," said Thomas J. Miller, the former US ambassador to Greece and Plan's new chief executive.

Tutu

"And parents whose children go missing during disasters like the tsunami or because they are abducted by traffickers may even be unable to get help until crying their sons or daughters because they cannot prove the age of their children—or in many cases that these children even exist," he said.

The region with the most unregistered children is South Asia, with 63 percent of births not recorded every year, followed by sub-Saharan Africa with 55 percent.

In Central and eastern Europe countries and the former Soviet bloc, 23 percent of children aren't legally registered. In East Asia and the Pacific, the figure is 19 percent, in the Middle East and North Africa 16 percent, in Latin America and the Caribbean 13 percent, and in industrialized countries 2 percent.

Miller blamed neglect and apathy among governments for the failure to register children.

"This is not high technology and it's not expensive," he said, noting that in Cambodia, which he just visited, 2.4 million people were registered in less than four months using Hype pens.

Philippine Air Compressors Pte Corporate said his country was aiming for 500 percent birth registration by 2030 and called for the lowering or elimination of registration fees.

Plan is currently working with local partners in over 40 countries to boost the rates of child registration, Miller said.

"This is going to be a week in progress for the rest of our lives," he said.

Tutu urged those who successfully fought for an end to apartheid to join the campaign to ensure that every child in the world is registered and has an identity.

"I never give up," he said. "I believe human beings are fundamentally good and that when people want to do good, they will do the right thing." AP

FIRE WALKERS
The Chinese Buddhists carry idols through flames during a traditional ceremony at the Lin Kai Wow shrine in Pattani province, 1,150 km south of Bangkok, Feb. 23. Thousands of Buddhists celebrated the festival in which the images of local deities must be carried through water and fire. AP/PAN

Bosnian ex-army chief to surrender

SARAJEVO—Bosnian Muslim wartime army commander Rasim Delic said on Tuesday he will surrender to the UN court in The Hague which has indicted him over war crimes committed against ethnic Serbs during the 1992-95 war.

"As a person respecting the law I cannot do-do anything else than co-operate the truth about the 1992-1995 war before The Hague tribunal," Delic said in a statement on national television.

Earlier Tuesday television said that Delic will go to The Hague on Monday, but he did not confirm that in his statement.

"The indictment is related to my alleged indirect responsibility in forming of El Mujahedi unit and its actions," Delic said, adding that the indictment was delivered to the Muslim Croat entity's Prime Minister Ahmed Hadzipasic.

The El Mujahedi unit was made up of fighters from Islamic countries fighting alongside the Muslim-led Bosnian army.

The television said that Delic, 56, was charged over war crimes committed by the El Mujahedi unit serving within the 3rd army corps against ethnic Serbs in the area of Orasje and Vozuca in central Bosnia.

"On one hand I'm surprised because my responsibility does not exist, while on the other it is a kind of relief... to end speculations and uncertainty," Delic said in the interview.

"The El Mujahedi unit was by some form no in the chain of command. There were three command levels between me and them," he added.

Delic, who served as army chief from 1993 until the end of the war in the second Bosnian Muslim wartime army chief to be indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia.

The prosecutor Geler Gulldemir has convicted to the UN tribunal to answer to charges relating to the massacre of 60 Croat civilians in the village of Grubavici and Uzdol in 1993. Gulldemir's trial started earlier this month.

In April Bosnian media reported that the UN tribunal was to indict Delic along with the wartime vice president Ejup Ganic, interior minister Bakir Alispahic, and field corps commander Sakib Mahmuljanin.

The retired general, Delic, who currently serves as a military adviser to the Muslim member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency Sulejman Tihic, was the first to confirm these media reports.

"We can present Delic as a commander of Bosnian army which defended the country from aggressors and which defended its people from destruction," Tihic told local media.

Post war Bosnia is made up of two semi-independent entities—the Muslim-Croat federation and Serb-run Republika Srpska.

Despite international pressure, the Republika Srpska remains the only territory of former Yugoslavia that has not yet arrested a single war crimes suspect. AFP

to resume nuke talks

BEIJING—North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has said his country is willing to return to nuclear disarmament talks despite an earlier threat to withdraw from negotiations, Chinese officials reported Tuesday.

Less than two weeks after the North announced it had nuclear weapons and was snubbing the talks indefinitely, Kim told Chinese envoy Wang Jiarui he remained committed to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

"He hopes that the international community can understand that in the Feb. 10 declaration, the North Korean side never opposed the six-party talks and that the DPRK (North Korea) would be willing to return to the six-party talks at an early date, if the conditions are right," Wang told Chinese television.

"General Secretary Kim Jong-il made it very clear that to maintain a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and resolve the issue through dialogue, this goal and this position had not changed," he said.

Wang, who returned to Beijing Tuesday after talks with Kim, did not specify what the conditions were. The Stalinist state has previously demanded one-on-one talks with the United States, which favors a multilateral approach.

Kim expressed hope that Washington would "show trustworthy sincerity and move," the Korean Central News Agency reported.

The United States said Tuesday it wanted North Korea to return to the six-party talks, which also include South Korea, Russia, Japan and China.

"We've been clear, we want the North Koreans to return to the six-party talks," said White House spokesperson Trent Duffy, who did not comment on Pyongyang's request for unspecified "conditions" to resume negotiations.

US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice later spoke with Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing on the telephone, agreeing that the talks should resume "as early as possible," China's official Xinhua news agency said.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi urged Pyongyang to return to the table unconditionally while the Russian foreign ministry welcomed Kim's comments, saying the talks were the "shortest route" to resolving the nuclear issue. *AFP*

Sea of ice found near Mars equator

AMSTERDAM—Images relayed by a European space probe reveal the existence of a sea of ice close to the equator of Mars, scientists said Tuesday at a conference in the Netherlands.

The evidence comes from photographs —not yet published—taken last year by the European Space Agency's Mars Express probe currently orbiting the red planet.

The scientists said the existence of water or ice would significantly increase the chance that microscopic life may also be found on Mars.

Scientists have long theorized there was once water on Mars, and data from Nasa's Mars Rovers has recently appeared to confirm it. But most scientists believed the water had evaporated into the atmosphere early in the planet's history.

"The point is that the ice is very recent: it appears to still be there, covered beneath a layer of dust and ash," John Murray of Britain's Open University said.

Murray co-authored a paper detailing the findings which was to be published in the March 17 issue of Nature.

"You can see pack ice in formations that are remarkably similar, identical to ice floes in Antarctica," he said.

Murray said the ice was believed to have formed five million years ago—the blink of an eye, in geological terms—atop a body of water the size of Earth's North Sea.

The water is believed to have originated beneath the surface of Mars, near a series of fractures known as the Cerberus Fossae, where it gushed forth in a catastrophic flood after being warmed by the planet's core. *AP*

Gay marriages part of 'ideology of evil,' says Pope in book

ROME—Homosexual marriages are part of "a new ideology of evil" that is insidiously threatening society, Pope John Paul says in a new book published on Tuesday.

In "Memory and Identity," the Pope also calls abortion a "legal extermination" comparable to attempts to wipe out Jews and other groups in the 20th century.

He also reveals that he is convinced the Turkish gunman who shot him in 1981 did not act alone and suggests that the former Communist Bloc may have been behind the plot to kill him.

The 84-year-old Pontiff's book, a highly philosophical and intricate work on the nature of good and evil, is based on conversations with philosopher friends in 1993 and later with some of his aides.

In one section about the role of lawmakers, the Pope takes another swipe at gay marriages when he refers to "pressures" on the European Parliament to allow them.

"It is legitimate and necessary to ask oneself if this is not perhaps part of a new ideology of evil, perhaps more insidious and hidden, which attempts to pit human rights against the family and against man," he writes.

The Pope's fifth book for mass circulation, issued by Italian publisher Rizzoli, sparked controversy in Germany and elsewhere after Jewish groups protested against leaked excerpts comparing the Holocaust to abortion.

In at least two sections of the book, the Pope talks about the Nazi attempt to exterminate Jews and the wholesale slaughter of political opponents by Communist regimes after World War Two.

In following paragraphs he says that legally elected parliaments in formerly totalitarian countries were today allowing what he called new forms of evil and new exterminations.

"There is still, however a legal extermination of human beings who have been conceived but not yet born," he writes.

"And this time we are talking about an extermination which has been allowed by nothing less than democratically elected parliaments where one normally hears appeals for the civil progress of society and all humanity," he writes.

In Germany, a leader of the country's Central Council of Jews called the comparison unacceptable.

At a news conference presenting the book, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican's top doctrinal official, dismissed the Jewish charges. *Reuters*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Unshared burden

EDITORIAL

BRIEF three months after declaring that we were over the hump, President Macapagal-Arroyo has resurrected the specter of an Argentina-type economic meltdown. "The bottom line is, we need to raise P60 billion through legislative measures and P100 billion through administrative measures," she said during a visit to Bohol. "Otherwise, in two years' time we will be an Argentina."

That was all it took, the warning first issued by 11 professors from the UP School of Economics in August last year, a warning immediately picked up by the President herself. She then announced that the country was experiencing a fiscal crisis and quickly unveiled a package of measures designed to increase revenues and cut government expenditures, with the ultimate goal of holding back a runaway deficit and arresting the growth of an already huge public debt. The people responded by marching their opposition to new taxes and, in online phrases in Filipinoese, event-tagging in some studied satire for a hard-selling drive organized by their Bishop. Congress started discussing new tax measures, and some lawmakers offered to take cuts on, if not completely give up, their pork-barrel allocations.

However, all the good will and good intentions evaporated as soon as it became clear that sacrifices had to be shared. It soon became clear that all the sacrifices would have to be borne exclusively by the citizens, from higher taxes to increased power rates.

After expressing shock over the high salaries and perks enjoyed by officials of a number of government-owned corporations, Malacañang seems to have forgotten that cutting expenditures can help reduce the deficit. When local government officials appeared a reluctance to their internal revenue allotments, Malacañang also dropped the idea. After Congress passed one of the eight new tax measures proposed by Malacañang, some lawmakers promptly demanded the release of their pork barrel. It looked as if our lawmakers passed the new tax measures not to save the nation from bankruptcy and the wrenching choice but to preserve their pork barrel funds and their usual kickbacks.

The administration seemed to have lost sight of the real reason for its frenzied search for additional revenues. Like some congressmen who started licking their lips after smelling pork, Malacañang began talking about the many added services the government could provide as a result of the new revenue-generating measures. But then, didn't the President declare the crisis over some time in November, long before the government could collect a single centavo from the new taxes?

Malacañang and Congress were already counting the chickens—until the international credit ratings agencies, Moody's Investors Service especially, rudely reminded them that more than P5 trillion in public sector debt is unpaid and unbudgeted and the government's capacity to pay it remained in doubt. The reminder by itself, coming in the form of a two-notch downgrade in our sovereign debt rating, is going to cost us plenty: setting us back by $114 million in added interest costs (really, according to some estimates).

That's nothing compared to what will happen if the government cannot put its financial house in order and very soon. For the President, it was time to re-issue the dire warning she made six months ago. It only to get Congress to act more quickly on the other revenue-generating measures, especially the increase in the value-added tax. But will the warning work this time? Will it make Congress work faster on the other tax measures, for instance? More importantly, will it make people understand and accept the need to bear a heavier burden in terms of more taxes and higher prices?

It's unlikely that people will rally behind the effort like they did last year. But when Congress and Malacañang seem determined to dump all of the responsibility for paying off the country's debts on them

Right path

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE PROTOCOL is an imperfect instrument. It doesn't consider the pollution produced by China and by developing countries (indignant at the notion of the scientists that will don't no practice the production effects. Washington states however that it will not sign the protocol. The second part of the revision process of the world are "made in the USA."

Kyoto is not the instrument against pollution, but it indicates the correct path, there is no other solution.

Greenhouse effect, depletion and environment.

The best thing is not to make it and it and divide-and-rule, but how to divorce together, how to continue the consensus at the Protocol.

Corriere della Sera (Milan, Italy)

When the fat lady sings

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"FOUR grandchildren's children will be grateful," Mayor Tomas Osmeña proclaimed when restored taxpayers asked him how much they will pay for the Cebu City South Reclamation Project's two forms.

"Not a centavo," he claimed to date May 2007 successor. The national government would pick up the tab. But he flocked, ever then, the question of how much.

Last Tuesday, City Hall officially admitted that it ballooned P1 million dollars copy for the mayor alone. Gone September, the first payment of the principal, amounting to P900.3 million, looks to ill fate payment of P333.6 million, due in 2025.

"By 2025, Osmeña will no longer be mayor," the Cebu Daily News pointed out. "Mabuhay pa, and we along with them. But our grandchildren will be still saddled with the tab. Sa, kuno dati ako. Ikaw ba?" Mayor Osmeña's question.

Two years ago, Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña "sought up about P10 billion" to pay the Land Bank, Japan Bank for International Cooperation and the national government.

As price-fixed repayments start, a full quarter of Cebu City's budget is locked for the 2025. That's more than twice the amount Iloilo City has set aside, Osmeña grudgingly admits.

Thus, left under purchase of heavy equipment usually needed for upland barangays. Thus, left under purchase of heavy equipment usually needed for upland barangays. Thus, left under purchase of heavy equipment usually needed for upland barangays. Thus, left under purchase of heavy equipment usually needed for upland barangays.

"Weight of the debt crisis" suffer, Iloilo City's officers offer 29 cts or every 100 kids in the city. And one out of every four pregnant women is short of vitamin A.

Cebu City's officers, by twelve times, although comments he has to cut down. "Of problematical resolution. After between cities said, to Osmeña matches his grandson claims, more soft. How do he good mayor go wrong?

Osmeña's gamble for one. The Tokyo IOUs were contracted for when the dollar fetched P25. The value of the peso plummeted and hovers at P54 to a dollar today. So, the IOUs have "imploded."

The original P2.3 billion loan has ballooned to P6.2 billion. And so has the repayment burden for every man, woman and child within Cebu. Each is now stapled with a six-equivalent burden of P6,424—up from P14,950 in the loan signing. Compare that with the P44,549 annual debt burden of every Filipino.

Contrary the mayor's control, for measures to cushion them are, he finalized them.

Take one measure against pure Barangays. Aumers advise Samuel Dante suggested. The mayor scoffed.

Follow your father's example, a London Inform of Economics advisor suggested. Mayor begin Osmeña snapped hard by debt. That may be emulated "the budget of basic services from debt claims. Big bucks emerged loudly.

"Mr Osmeña think we are God's gift to man," explained a senior member of the clan. "Many of us we do clean for him."

Thus, Mayor Osmeña brandished no questions on the loan. A Mabolo-like emerged to thoroughly consult the Council for years.

"Consumed mingling of City Hall's spending foreign debt is changed in place by a complete financial of monthly in the Council," the Sun Star Cebu reported. "Not to be mayor who towards "administrative handicapped." But for whatever does the citizens' role in paying the bill.

So business group or NGO lobed the tough questions over in the debate spinning. It was for a hand-wound "development" expressed. Or appeared to the dim-witted, everything both of a credible repayment policy. Most were women, from Cebu Daily News' Nanette Tiongson to San Sun's Jamie Gaisano and Gingay Gonzales, among others.

"Clearly we are a gift from Jesus. There are loans our grandchildren will have to pay," the Cebu Daily News summed up "Mayor pose the tax opinion." But Osmeña's comments were to be employed the tax-labor" (the 9th, 10, 2004 editorial added. "Even a Bohol-Bohoner 101 million loans factor ..."

"Many crucial issues of our national life have been overlooked in the agenda of public discussion," the business noted, and the last election in Cebu was notable for issues that overlooked the debt issue. "Our lives begin or end on the day we become silent about things that matter most."

In its editorial "Right hand, left hand 100s," the Cebu Daily News pointed out: "Osmeña lopped off P900.3 million from the 100's loan to pay—other? The 100. That's why. Mayor hedged from Tokyo is to pay off Tokyo plus interest on the debt." The gold units due left the right hand.

The Commission on Audit complained that City Hall "window dressed" its books by understating its two loans by P1.52 billion, revealed the Inquirer in a July 31, 2004 commentary.

The Inquirer noted that some years ago, the 1980 exchange rate. Stop using image, and figures and use the cash rates, the COA said. So, who is cooking what?

There is a standard Osmeña response. He'd rate the best "Mabolo-like" to be to keep his on measure of Iloilo. Investors buying could and the cash does stretch due for left hand to spying in the wind.

Back in 1997, the Sun Star challenged the mayor's "propaganda" on the dark side "under an" of his loans. "Let it be his name," that commentary suggested. "It isn't very unlike for he to do more to sing. When the collection bills are presented, that's when the left hand will sing."

With another repayment bill of P6.24 million due next year alone, this left hand's part of the tagline shows. She's tapping—with gusto.

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Two-way street

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT HAPPENED something a much dollarized transaction on recently. The street's going to pass another Edsa, he said. He had placed an ominous tale to the two protesters over the downtown counter "Edsa 3" as Edsa or all, it is a complete monstrosity, he said, only to see both could have that. It was, not unlike Chavez injunction not to see both on Easter ground, he said. For some reason, this country seems to offer only two options. "You can't have a street pass, said that Edsa, is there outside over my day, he said, but for some reason it keeps falling to pass Edsa. Edsa has just become another word for Failure.

I can understand his frustration. But I doubt he understand why crises would like to believe, who inspire that my unrelenting campaign against the unrelenting inquiries of the current government is a sign of infectious disease. Or, to use the phrase, "Tourette's syndrome" (a medical disorder I was pursuing old.

The last does something doesn't sum up the way we expected doesn't make doing it unnecessary or not worth doing all over again. Or indeed, the fact that Edsa's serious problems are not worth doing doesn't make them impossible, or not worth embracing all over again. Blaming things on Arroyo and with provocation, however some people like to think does not. We have only the gift of imagination and foresight, neither of which can always prepare us for impending tragedy. In my case, we also have the gift, or curse, of hope, which urges us always not surrender and propel us heedless to find tomorrow when, believing things can, or should, be better than what they are.

The Bohol tourism mayor's two-hour Andres Bonifacio and Apolinario Mabini was too my two month understanding because it was appropriated by the elite and were for tragic any year because the tourist was accepted. Both Bonifacio and Mabini were tragic because the elite were Bonifacio and Mabini did what they had to do. They saw tyranny and fought it, they plumped freedom and realized it, they dreamed of a better world and died for it. Or in Bonifacio's and Mabini's case.

The same is true of the revolutions inspired by the modern revolution and those who took to the hills or bestowed underground in the 1970s. It was no less words under taking for those it was appropriated by the elite and were for tragic because to own leaders subrevolved by their own problems were for expressing and stifling dissent, it has they drove home with their killing fields. The sacrifices made for the dead, made or there to be dead of youth, were not in vain. The phrase "Death to tyranny," which accompanied Marcos injustice to the turning point, is the more powerful than we thought. It cuts you mean, you are not alone the tyrannical who tyrannize or can not alone to be there, so be there with you, to can, and should, the mean, you are not alone to have taken a bullet or the head for raising a fist or turning where did before you. Without the sacrifices before Aug. 21, 1983, there would have been no Edsa.

You'll have some people say, "I have no rights, if I had to do it all over again, I would." I am one of those who do not. The reason is simple. In the very beat, the reason for which I would go through the rigmarole I delineated is valid today as then. Or, however, there is no Edsa there will be valid. You refuse to fight tyranny for cause you could always find a tyranny out, you will see no end to tyranny. Worse, you will see no end. Life is a tolerance in tyranny taken for granted, tyranny continues as much as the sum of deprivation is a sum of tyranny.

At the very most, that is because the tyrannical seem really go for simple, however the cause for which they were made was dressed. When made the struggle against Marcos power, he was the struggle of Bayd, Bonifacio and Mabini against the Spanish and American. Thus was the impression that summoned a Mabini made the two Edsas possible were the struggles that were before them as well. The Ten Mission Commission's desire in "The Philippines A Free Revisited," were standard college history textbook, was that what Bonifacio and Mabini's revolution opposite were all the failed openings against Spanish rule in the past. It is a very good thing. What applies to Bonifacio and Bonifacio's struggles apply to those who came after.

Yes, I don't mind joining another Edsa, and will another, if that is what it takes to pull the country by its bootstraps. Which in my case, is I keep saying, is not the reason a thing is or not for. Don't just gather leaders in one place and call it Edsa. Really "Edsa" is not enough. What I do mind is that we, the people, keep going back to where we were after each Edsa, putting ourselves in the back for a job well done, assuming things will end growing better by themselves. What I do mind is that we, the people, keep falling back and assuming that the end of tyrannies, lapsing into restless stupidity, selling our souls are "over" to do the business "others" to do the rest.

The work of Edsa does not end with Edsa, it was Gregorio Aglipay Edsa. The problem has never been joining Edsa, the problem has always been fulfilling Edsa. We have no problem trying to have hands to do Edsa, problem, why can't we beyond ourselves to build a better country?

It's no small irony that we also call Edsa "people power" when it is the people who dare against other Edsa. Certainly, whose power disappears after Edsa, the existing government imposing to well on to rather than the other were measures to be taken from in government Edsa is a very long road.

It means nothing if we can't improve this on our doing. Or succumbs to ever-vast means.

Privacy issue far from settled

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

OPPONENTS of the national ID registration are [illegible] the Supreme Court decision ruled against it in 1996. I did some research, and I found out that the issue is more to me.

On Oct. 21, 1996, President Fidel Ramos issued administrative Order 308 to establish a national computerized identity system for government. Sen. Blas Ople, who endorsed the country's new Statute, said issued Executive Secretary Edwin Ermita before the SC for the AFP's defense. On July 23, 1996, the SC invalidated the Ramos AO on two grounds: (1) there is no law or statute cited for imposed by executive AO, but merely congressional; (2) that it violated the citizens' right to privacy.

There was a clear majority decision on ground No. 1, that a law is needed to set up the ID system; eight of 14 justices (justices Reynato Puno, Antonio Nachura, Romeo Callejo, Minita Chico-Nazario, Antonio Eduardo B. Nachura, Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez, Dante O. Tinga and Presbitero J. Velasco) said we do above their heroic Justice Andres Narvasa, Melo, Francisco, Mendoza, Quisumbing and Panganiban) said we do above their heroic Justice

Diaspora is not good for us

TOM is in reaction to the column of Antony Mercado on the Philippine diaspora. (PDI, 1/25/05) He must remember that no country has ever become strong because of diaspora. Diaspora is to a nation what homosexuality is to an individual. Diaspora is even worse because with it, a nation loses not only blood but also brain and brawn.

The classic example is Israel. After its citizens were scattered throughout the world by the Roman Empire, Israel practically died—it stayed in exist, it was revived. Strength. Zionism—the movement advocating the return of the Jews to Israel after the end of World War II.

Many emigration waves when a nation is in trouble. Another classic example was the potato famine in Ireland in the 1800s that led to the mass migration to America. Unemployment in England and religious persecution in Europe led to the mass emigrations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Only when the European economies, like Germany and Italy, began industrializing did their diasporas stop and they became strong.

Hitler's dictatorship and persecution of the Jews led to the emigration of Jewish scientists to the United States. This brain drain partly led to the defeat of Germany in World War II because the scientists who fled Hitler developed the atomic bomb for the United States instead of the Germans. As the biggest destination of immigrants, the United States developed rapidly to become the strongest country after the war.

Philippine emigration started during the Spanish colonial rule when Filipinos were conscripted by the Spanish government for slave labor in the Mariana and to fight in wars against the Portuguese. In the wake of the US occupation, Filipino skaters were recruited to work in the Hawaiian cane fields and to pick pineapple in California. After World War II, our emigration to the United States consisted mostly of educated Filipinos and professionals.

In the 70s, the Marcos dictatorship consciously adopted the policy of encouraging mass labor emigration because of growing unemployment at home, to ease social unrest against the dictatorship and earn foreign exchange to pay our debts. This Marcos policy continues to be implemented by our government up to the present. However, despite the remittances of overseas Filipino workers, our country has not prospered.

An ADB study says OFW remittances have not helped the country to progress. It is easy to see why. Remittances by OFWs are used mostly for consumption by their families. Capital does not come from consumption but from profits, but the profits are being made by multinationals whose products are being bought by the OFWs' families. Despite the heavy sacrifice of our OFWs, our people remain pathetically impoverished.

Unless we change policy and concentrate on internal development to keep our workers, intellectuals and professionals here, our country will remain impoverished, starving and trembling.

—MANUEL T. LAZARO
mtlazaro@yahoo.com

LETTERS

On ARMM's missing GSIS funds

FLAME allow me to reply to the letter titled "Funds behind missing GSIS ... accountants" (PDI, 1/31/05).

It was quite clear in the article of Cynthia Balana, in our party's press release, and in my privilege speech that the investment P1 billion compulsory GSIS contribution of workers scattered of the principal amounting to P400.1 million and P473.6 million in accumulated interests.

I have read the memorandum of agreement entered into by the Government Service Insurance System, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and the Department of Budget and Management. I maintain that it is not enough that the ARMM and implied officials acknowledge the loss of GSIS contributions amounting to just their contributions while it pays at the interest rate of 12 percent per annum.

Senate Resolution 534, which I endorsed, under our sponsorship authorized the Blue Ribbon committee to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation.

1. To determine how and why the Duplid Affairs failed to remit the contributions to the GSIS.

2. To ascertain if the illegal disbursements of the Duplid-ARMM funds by authorized by the Bureau of Treasury in Mindanao was in any way related to the contributions the Duplid-Affairs failed to remit to the GSIS.

3. To determine how and why the appropriate procedure was disregarded in the disbursements of the funds.

4. To identify the public officials involved in the commission and to determine the extent of their participation and tainting if any.

5. To identify measures to prevent, monitor and preclude similar occurrences.

I want to assure everyone concerned that my offices are not in any way tainted of or in the coming ARMM elections. Yes, I am not from the ARMM, but as a senator of Mindanao and a former educator, I believe I have the duty to protect the interest of our public school teachers and explain the pension requirements for the missing GSIS premiums. As a party-list representative, my work knows no geographical boundaries. As a representative of the poor and the disadvantaged sector, I am bound to defend and uphold their rights.

I hope that the congressional investigation will also send a signal to the culprits, this Malacañan and the 32 other legislators who signed my resolution, including the 22 legislators from Mindanao and Muslim constituencies, are determined in seeking justice for the workers and public sector employees who were deprived of their rightful GSIS benefits.

I also urge the workers and employees of the Duplid-ARMM to cooperate with their vigilance and help us in resolving this case.

—BEN MARIO ZEVALLOS,
party-list representative,
Akbayan,
Rm. 414, South Wing,
House of Representatives,
Batasan Hills, QC

'Pre-agreed option'

PE writes with reference to our op-ed piece on taxes by Gerardo E. Raoul III. (PDI, 2/12/05 and 1/10/05)

Raoul wrote the articles relying solely on information apparently provided to him by Gen. Ion Aventus and GIC Development Corp., with whom we are involved in legal disputes concerning, among others, GIC's refusal to pay AFS Alan Eng's share of P313.21 million. The dispute arose from the listed company's exercise of a pre-agreed option to sell back GIC Global shares to them.

Raoul did not get our side and his articles maligned our professional reputation.

He categorically states that AFS did not violate its fiduciary responsibilities as owner of the TPG Trust Fund and did not violate any law, rule or regulation when it invested the TPG Trust Fund in shares of stock of GI Life.

Under the Trust Agreement, AFS has "full power and authority without the intervention of TPG," to invest in any property, including shares of stock, provided the investment is in accordance with sound investment principles and SEC rules and regulations.

The investment in GI has proven to be profitable. In 2001, GI paid the TPG Fund a cash dividend of approximately P19 million, thereby reducing the Fund's investment cost from P62.4 million to P72.4 million. Additionally, the value of GI shares has since increased to 10 pesos/share for the last four years (was P14.2 million in 2001, P1.9 million in 2002, P10.8 million in 2003, and P6.1 million in 2004).

The sale that what funds of pre-need companies must be invested in shares of stock only of listed companies was issued by the SEC on Aug. 16, 2001, to take effect 15 days after its last publication in two newspapers. The TPG Fund signed the Sale and Purchase Agreement with GI Capital International Holdings on Mar 11, 2001 and was therefore not covered by the said rule.

AFS presented the GI investment to the TPG Board not because its approval was required but only as a matter of prudence. Since board approval was not required, the board could not have imposed any condition for the investment.

On the other hand, the office units comprising the TPG Building would not be sold (or even offered for sale) until the building is converted into a condominium. The 10,000 initially disapproved the "condominiumization" of the building due to lack of adequate parking space. AFS had to get the P20 million condominium decision, then completed the conversion of the building for the issuance of a Certificate of Registration and License to Sell. This certificate was issued only on Feb. 1, 2005.

As chair of TPG, Inventor was apprised that the investment of the TPG Fund in GI shares would proceed ahead of the sale of the office units, and he did not raise any objections at that time. In fact, he accepted his election as the GI Life board, as one of two representatives of the TPG Fund. He also participated in the relaunch of the company to insurance business on Jan. 17, 2002, several months after the acquisition took place.

He was clear Raoul would be made to wait and pass our side, superior with whatever that that press releases Aventus and GIC may make.

—RAMON E. ARAUZ, chair,
MANUEL B. TRINIDAD JR.,
president, AFS Sterling Financial Corp.,
Ayala Triangle, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

Across the NATION

Furniture makers reel from log ban

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—The production costs of at least 600 furniture companies in Central Luzon have risen more than double while few exporting firms in the region face the risk of defaulting on delivering orders as prices of wood have gone up by 40 percent.

The increase in prices of raw materials came because of the shortage of supply since the government imposed a total log ban in December last year.

Industry leaders reported this on Tuesday in Dinalupihan, Bataan, presidential adviser for North Luzon, in they lobbied for a total log ban to protected forests and selective logging in plantation forests under a sustainable forest management program.

"The prolonged total log ban is only prevalent on businesses in commercial operations," the regional chapters of the Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines (CFIP), Philippine Exporters Foundation (Philexport) and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry said in a statement submitted to Bai.

"Should this pressure continue for an indefinite period, jobs will be lost which will impact on the economic condition of the region," the groups said.

According to the CFIP companies manufacturing furniture, upholstery, home wares and holiday décor are mostly small and medium enterprises and directly employ some 100,000 workers. It said the industry contributed to $45.5 million.

Romulo Gatmaitan, CFIP Pampanga president, said Pampanga, where 40 percent of the companies are based, accounted for $34.222 million or 69.9 percent of the regional furniture exports.

The ETI and Central Luzon is the third biggest furniture-exporting area after Metro Manila and Cebu.

In a separate interview, CFIP Chair Jose Leo Cajucom said the entire industry last year generated export sales of $27.9 million (P1.6 billion), with domestic sales about equal of that amount.

As the industry backed under the pressures of the log ban, leaders said the furniture trade had to Metro Manila down more than 1,000 buyers or three or when is attracted in last year's exhibits.

But said this indicated that the furniture industry continued to generate interest in the international market.

The CFIP and the industry's strongest over competitors in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam were design and craftmanship.

"Sustainable forest management is what the Philippine forest needs and this is precisely what the legitimate wood-based and wood-processing industries have been practicing. The total log ban punishes the innocent and productive along with the guilty and destructive ones," the groups said.

The industry leaders, during their meeting with Bai, emphasized their support for the government's efforts to protect and preserve the forests.

As of CY2003, the country's forest cover had dwindled to 7.369 million hectares. In Central Luzon, it was down to 500,000 ha, including reports more than 100,000 ha of forests that been the brunt of last year's landslides blamed on illegal logging there.

"Our agenda is for acceptable approach to the problem that would not literally kill an industry that generates dollar revenues and provides jobs to our people," the groups said.

Bai said he would take up the industry's concerns in new Secretary Cabinet meeting.

"The furniture industry in Central Luzon bears the collateral damage in the log ban. We really have to endorse back production-related problems through a holistic approach," Tina told the business

Benedict Oreglon, FDI General Manager, Bataan

ITS CHIC Industry also won't need wood. Rattan weavers also produce furniture made of rush as in Taytay, Quezon.

PNP chief takes closer look at pols' hands in private armies

By Nonoy Espina
PhilStar News Luzon Bureau

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—Director General Edgar Aglipay, chief of the Philippine National Police, is studying a confidential report identifying politicians who use PNP's paramilitary and counter-insurgency units in relation to the government crackdown on private armed groups in Mindanao.

Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza, Cordillera police director, submitted the document to Aglipay during a week-long meeting here on Feb. 18, which was extended for two other officials.

But this study, then anyone, have been talking behind a politicians, who use the latter to be armed of a political number plot.

A government soldier, who is now in hiding, had implicated Abra Gov. Vicente Valera in an assassination plot, which allegedly involved an Army official and other soldiers.

A local newspaper was on their the a members by 21 days mayors and four provincial board members who stood by Valera's "integrity and innocence."

Valera said his report to Aglipay details all of the evidence that is in police custody, which could resolve Abra's political crisis.

President Macapagal-Arroyo formed a task force to investigate an Inquirer report in September last year about the private armed groups maintained by Abra politicians.

Mr. Arroyo was reported to sign a power accord in December 2004 and ap- ent an end to political hostilities there after politicians agreed to surrender their firearms to Chief Supt. Rodolfo Albano, Versoza's predecessor.

But police officials decided to focus on securing more evidence instead.

Although police have confirmed that politicians supplied their men with high-powered firearms, the officials argued, cleared outlaws' allies and hoodlum armed.

An Armed Forces investigation of a military-led assassination squad supposedly hired by Valera appears connected to the private armies.

A soldier claimed that he and another colleague were hired by Balaw through Army Lt. Col. Noel Mizing to shatter Lagayan River or Cordillera Lunes.

Coconut authorities offer alternative fuel for mining

BAGUIO CITY—The government's indirect crusade to popularize the coconut fuel as an alternative energy source is now being offered to the mining industry the business hound here on Wednesday.

The Philippine Coconut Authority and producers of coconut methyl ester (CME) are studying mine drilling and processing equipment that use diesel because their product can reduce fossil fuel pollution substantially, said Aldito Hingpatong, product representative of Clemens Inc., a CME manufacturer.

Before? Atlas, PCA biofuel fuel expert, said the government has not been successful in advocating CME's benefits to motorists.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Memorandum Circular 56 directing all government agencies to mix 1 percent of CME in its regular diesel consumption, but few have heeded her call "because they have no money to buy the fuel additive," Atlas said the business.

The company's oil industry also objected to the customer tax code (CCM), saying the customer deterrence "could endanger the oil industry's existing retail infrastructure," Atlas said.

He said 2001 calculations indicate that gasoline firms stand to lose P1.4 billion (the retail value of 70 million liters of gasoline that will be displaced by 1 percent of CME) should every motorist use the alternative fuel.

He said coconut planters also objected to the CME program because they believed that producing CME an into industries relying on coconut oil would cost their families.

He said the Department of Energy is enlisting the stakeholders' response to CME after it was piloted in the city in March 2004.

He said a national group may be convened it involves other industries like mining to provide CME a steady customer while the government studies how to make the fuel acceptable to the public.

Baguio was selected as test CME by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives as a member of its Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program because 62 percent of its pollution come from motor vehicles.

Baguio was again launched on Wednesday as the first member of the US-led Sustainable Energy Development Program's (SEDP) Clean Cities campaign, which advocates environmental back-to-communities that the World Bank had identified in a 2003 survey as "pollution challenged."

The Kyoto Protocol has made pollution reduction in the country an imperative, said Sedna Chingcuanco, SEDP country director.

Although the country's commitment to the world's unified environmental document does not oblige it to reduce carbon dioxide emissions this early, the Kyoto Protocol compels the Philippines to initiate pollution reduction, said Nestor Aquinaldo, the city planning officer assigned to supervise Baguio's Clean Cities program.

Mayor Bernalo Vergara said the city government would lead in using cars diesel by requiring government vehicles to use cars diesel.

He also said that the city government would make up for the installation fund by disseminating information about the benefits of using cars diesel.

The PCA said zoos fuel might be the key to ensuring that mining remains environmentally sustainable.

Hingpatong said modern mining equipment should be compatible with CME. Vincent Cabreros with reports from Aprilie Joy Fernandez and Jimi Santiago, PNI Northern Luzon Bureau

2 jail guards charged with escape of drug suspect

BUTUAN CITY—Police have filed criminal and administrative charges against two prison guards tagged as responsible in the Dec. 15 escape of Mauleik Ameril Sudiacion, the No. 1 drug suspect in the Caraga Region.

Supt. Boslito Morgan, regional chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), identified the prison guards as Jocile Cuana and Berto Ser Morales.

Two other civilian suspects were also charged.

Morgan said Cuana and Morales, who were guarding Sudiacion inside his detention cell at the Agusan del Norte Provincial Jail, "let Sonie Gem gasoski" posing the way for the drug suspect to escape.

"There was apparent laxity. Cuana and Morales really facilitated Sudiacion in his escape," Morgan said.

Sudiacion was arrested in an en masse operation by members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in 2003.

Supt. Gerie de la Torre, regional director of PDEA, who earlier identified the escape as "staged," welcomed the filing of charges against Cuana and Morales.

De la Torre said the prison guards must be "prosecuted" for the crimes they allegedly committed.

He admitted that the drug suspect's escape caused "demoralization" among bosses. Franklin Gallagnal, PNI Mindanao Bureau

GLEAMING BAYONETS

A senior cadet officer polishes the bayonets of cadets from the honor guard battalion of the Philippine Military Academy, who were preparing for rites at the recent annual PMA homecoming in Fort del Pilar in Baguio City.

Baguio execs assure city safe from meningo during flower fest

By Donna Domadia
PDI Nor Boots Gaoen Bur wiss

BAGUIO CITY—Mayor Bernalo Vergara and health officials here have reassured tourists and residents that the city is safe from the harmful disease meningococcemia as Baguio celebrates the 2005 Baguio Flower Festival.

Several cases of meningococcal disease have been reported in the city since the Department of Health lowered the alert status on the city on Jan. 24.

"The law is explicit: We go out meetings that has the cases are sporadic. Vigilance means social coughing, sneezing, spitting in public placed. And for any flu like symptom felt, a patient must promptly go to medical authorities. Anybody who has come in close contact with suspected cases must take antibiotic treatment. The vigilance we observed during the height of the crisis should be the same now," Vergara said during a briefing.

Dr. Florencio Reyes, chief of the Baguio health department, said they have tapped barangay officials in the city to feed the latest information do'ne on meningococcemia.

Reyes said they have instructed barangay officials to ensure that all tourists in their areas are safe from the disease.

Vergara also said the city has more than an ample supply of antibiotics.

"There is sufficient stock of hand and we can of ways purchase more. In fact, we have even of, hand medicines to other areas in the Cordillera. We are willing to share and only expecting had also our stock of prophylactic [medicine]," he said.

Health officials and hospitals in the city are now more capable of detecting the meningococcemia bacteria in the laboratory.

"There are more confirmed cases now because of enhanced laboratory equipment. Almost all private hospitals are now more capable [of detecting the bacteria]. The Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center is more highly capable of releasing samples to confirm the presence of the bacteria," said Dr. Raimundo Nicanor, medical specialist of the DOH's Epidemiology Center.

Reports of suspected cases have also increased because of an increased awareness and sensitivity to meningococcemia.

Since the alert was lowered on Jan. 24, health officials said nine laboratory-confirmed cases had been reported. Two of these patients died.

Health officials said six cases have been confirmed in Benguet and nine in the Province.

"We do expect cases to continue to come, but this is the tail end of the crisis. And the relaxing rule for contracting the disease is very low and should not pose a special concern for visitors, especially those planning to attend the festivities at Bel Shinglongan [flower festival]," said Dr. Antonio Bautista, medical specialist of the DOH Cordillera.

The Shinglongan, which started on Feb. 12, continues to draw more visitors to the city, officials said.

The highlights of the festival, the street dancing parade ("Panagbenga Parade") and the floral float parade ("Flowers in the Air"), will be held on Saturday (Feb. 26) and Sunday (Feb. 27), respectively.

Bishop warns of violence in ore-rich upland area

FEAR OF ARMY, NPA CLASH

Mangyan evacuation in Mindoro continues

By Madonna Virola
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BATANGAS, Nueva Vizcaya—Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena has warned that violence will erupt in an upland village, site of the proposed gold-copper project. If the government continues to push the operations of a foreign mining company there.

Villena quoted residents of Barangay Dalipit in upland Baco as saying they were being coaxed into signing documents over the government's alleged disregard of their plight.

"The people there are becoming restless. They are becoming aware of the realization that the government continues to insist on having the mining project," he said.

Gov't support

Villena was referring to the support being supposedly extended by the government to the controversial bid of Oman Arimco Mining Corp. (OAMC), an Australian company, to conduct large-scale mining in Barangay Dalipit.

According to the proponents, OAMC's Dalipit gold-copper project is expected to yield an estimated four million ounces of gold and 1.2 billion ounces of copper deposits.

Dalipit villagers, mostly Ifugao and Kalanguya settlers and members of environment and civil society organizations, have been opposing the project due to the alleged lack of prior consultation from the local communities.

"This has been the worst part of this controversy—that Dalipit is now divided because of mining. If [pro-mining groups] are going to continue pushing the project, there might be bloodshed. My God, that's enough," Villena said.

Mining ends

He smacked government officials for noting this aspect of mining and for "insisting the mining project down the throat of the people."

Villena earlier questioned the issuance by former Environment Secretary Heinz Guenzel of an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to the OAMC project, despite the unresolved issue of its acceptability among Dalipit residents.

The bishop said the government should be serious in endorsing the project and should consult the people who would be affected by it.

"Only then can they know the truth, and that is, that the people resist the land for agriculture," he said.

Jovynel Sinapuenga, regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, downplayed Villena's concerns. Mindoro Samson, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Facility lack excluded Negros from ad campaign

By Jhanna Magallanes
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Some provinces have been excluded from the promotion of the Department of Tourism (DOT)'s travel advocacy campaign, "I love Philippines Beyond Sea," because they lack the facilities.

This was the explanation of Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano after some mayors in Negros Oriental complained over the exclusion of their province from the DOT's marketing drive to attract domestic tourists and the Bilibigan cops travel to the country.

Without mining names, Durano said the DOT is now helping these "unprepared provinces" to develop their areas as tourist destinations.

Durano said he decided not to include these provinces in the campaign because these lacked the facilities that would provide the needs of tourists.

If the DOT would promote these provinces, he added, the tourists would have disaster that they would not be accommodated due to lack of facilities and would leave blame the tourism department.

Durano pointed out that these provinces were in the seminar-stage are prepared to accept these tourists because they have the facilities.

Several mayors in Negros Oriental were disappointed over the exclusion of the province from the DOT's promotions on "I love Philippines Beyond Sea."

Dumaguete City Mayor Agustin Perdices even thumbed down requests to display the attractions in his city, which promoted the all-year-round destinations.

LEARNING PROCESS
Two-year-old Jed Grace Baccasa's attention is focused on her father Jerry explaining the life cycle of marine turtles in Barangay Don Pedro in Plaridel, Zambales. Her father and a group of children recently saved from slaughter a Hawksbill turtle and released it to the sea.

ROUNDUP

Pangasinan cops awarded

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The Pangasinan police complete and awards during the 14th Philippine National Police anniversary in the Ilocos and Cordillera. The Pangasinan police announced some of active the best provincial police office Dagupan City, Sual city policemen, Mangatarem town, best police station in the region category. The Dagupan and Mangatarem police officers were decorated best station and children welcomed and Alaminos City for the best provincial mobile group. | KIMI PINEL Sept. Edgar Batitan, Pangasinan deputy police director, said the policemen edged the police officers of Cordillera, Ilocos Sur and Benguet Mobile for PNP's performance evaluation rating in the first, second and fourth quarters last year. Yolanda Sotto-Acosta, PDI Abraham Lacno Bersan

Cargo exec killed

SULTAN KUDARAT, Maguindanao—An unidentified man shot dead a supervisor of a cargo forwarder here Saturday night in what police believed was a case of personal grudge. Rolando Lopez, 42, supervisor of Fast Cargo forwarders was driving his vehicle and stopped in Barangay Crossing Simuay at about 7 p.m. the assigned here his car he allegedly went a man. Suddenly, several gunshots were heard at 7.30 p.m. Edwin Nolasco, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Ban on bird hunting

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO — The Pampanga Mayors' League (PML) has approved a resolution calling the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to prohibit the hunting of all species of migratory birds in Pampanga, particularly in the Candaba Swamp. The resolution called the DENR to go after those who hunt, trap and sell migratory birds. The PML said the preservation of migratory birds would boost the province's bid to become an eco-tourism destination. Joe Malig, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Man nabbed for theft

DAGUPAN CITY—Police arrested a man accused of stealing cellphones from residents in Barangay Nansa here on Saturday. Police identified Sabitan, 30, was identified by one of the victims, arrested in a buy-bust operation. The victim, Ma. Angelly Jane Sorono, had phones in August and January last year. Investigators said Sabitan posed as a customer who pretended the owner's to exchange their cell phones to top of the line, after he had stolen the phones. He then sold the phones to pawn shop. Joe Bimbao, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

3 bodies found

CABANATUAN CITY—Police are clueless on the killing of three people whose bodies were found on Saturday in south Cabanatuan. Senior Inspector Romeo Bautista Chief of the Station additional base 10 miles south. Capt. Jesus Gordon Dacuan Jr. chief of police, identified the victims as Marlon Bautista of Cabanatuan, Pangasinan, and Angel of Bambar, Tarlac, and Nonato de Guzman of Pantabangan. Bulacan. Bulletin was shot while the two others were nearly gunshot collected in the warehouse. Dacuanan said the bodies were discovered after the sales representative visited the warehouse. Boniface Dupas, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Inmate beaten up

SUBIC, SAN FERNANDO CITY—An inmate, serving a 4-year sentence for a drug offense, landed in a hospital after an inmate allegedly beaten up on Feb. 12. The victim, Fidel Castro, who is now confined in a private hospital, told reporters that prior to the beating, he figured in a brawl with a fellow inmate over food ration. The night before, he was allegedly stabbed in the chest by the same inmate. Castro said he fled, but said the fellow inmate was another inmate. The said he was under after allowing Castro to seek medical treatment. But Supt. Ariel Arnaiz, city jail warden, denied the allegation. Arnaiz said Castro was injured in a fall from a bunk bed. Arnaiz said he was not informed Castro to be push-ups and bench. Apollo Quiz, PDI Bulacan Bureau

Grassroots mining confab

CITY OF CALAMBA—The first national grassroots conference on mining will be held in Calamba, Manila-based today and tomorrow. The meeting, with the theme "Empowering Communities to Confront the Threat of Mining" is expected to be a venue for sharing experiences of mining, discussing lessons from their experiences and organizing a concerted advocacy, according to a press release. The conference was organized by the Foundation for Philippine Environment, Kalikasan Foundation, Philippine Association for Multinational Corporations, Center for Labor Research Concerns, Bulacan Foundation for Social Action, Mandaluyong Council for Environmental Concerns, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment and Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center.

Judge orders exhumation of body of slain cult head's wife

By Jaime R. Balandan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Regional Trial Court has ordered the exhumation of the body of Alma Bacolod-Erlera, wife of cult leader Julius Erlera Jr. who stands accused of killing her, in just in two questions about the identity of the corpse found in Dalaguete town, Cebu in 2003.

RTC Judge Geraldine Young granted the motion of the private prosecutors during the hearing on Monday, despite the opposition of Erlera's lawyers.

The found remains in the region made by the private prosecutors that Alma's remains be exhumed, so a DNA and dental examination could be conducted to establish the identity of the corpse found in Barangay Cero, Dalaguete.

"The court must give equal opportunities to both the prosecution and defense to bring their evidence. It is therefore not just for interest of justice by more of the obligation of the court to call the prosecution and defense the right to present their evidence," the judge said.

The court tentatively scheduled the exhumation on March 1 depending on the availability of experts who would exhume and convert samples from the corpse to be submitted to a DNA test.

Experts sought

Young, the slain judge to handle the sensational case, suggested to both parties that they would tap the expertise and technical services of the University of the Philippines and the National Bureau of Investigation.

Erlera, the supreme master of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association, is facing parricide charges for allegedly killing his wife in January 2003.

He has been out on a P1 million bail since last year to allow him to get medical treatment for his heart ailment.

Last Feb. 16, the prosecution's team, composed of officers of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, filed the motion to exhume Alma's remains after the defense refused to admit during the case's pre-trial conference that the body recovered in Barangay Cero, Dalaguete town belonged to Alma.

But Orlando Salvanera, Erlera's lead defense counsel, opposed the motion, saying the exhumation would only delay the trial of the case.

He also said the defense had not yet questioned the identity of the body recovered in Dalaguete town.

Salvanera also questioned the applicability and reliability of DNA testing in the country.

Obligation

But Young said it was the court's obligation to afford both parties the right to present their pieces of evidence.

She said the exhumation, and the subsequent of the filing of the formal offer of exhibits by the prosecution, would not delay the case.

Young also cited several jurisprudence were the Supreme Court ruled the reliability of DNA tests to establish the identities of dead bodies.

Plan to haul nickel ore divides island residents

By Joey A. Galeria
PDI Visayas Bureau

MASBATE ISLAND, Cataingan, Eastern Samar—Tension has gripped this mineral-rich island, as residents are divided on whether to allow the Rizonium Mining Corp. to haul its ores from the 100-hectare lease of nickel ore stockpiled in Barangay Buenavista.

Several residents have been barricading the dock since Feb. 14 to prevent the mining firm from hauling its nickel ore out of the island.

A dialogue was held early Sunday in the barangay plaza to ease the tension but it bogged down after the opposing parties held on to their stance.

Among those who mediated were Chief Supt. Francisco Ricardo Ramos, regional director, Leonardo Mabulaca, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Eastern Visayas (DENR-8) director; Gerardo Mayor Amado Rosas and representatives of the DMC.

Cataingan will be deployed 16 policemen from the Regional Mobile Group in Masbate "to maintain peace and maintain order in the area."

"I told my policemen to disengage from any matters relative to the mining issue," he said.

But several residents were against the hauling of the ore because DMC management did not give them any assurance that this would not be used as an excuse for the mining company to resume mining operations.

They said they did not want DMC to resume operations because its mining operations in the past had resulted in "massive environmental destruction on the island."

"Any economic benefit that could be derived by just a few individuals on the island is not sufficient compared to the destruction brought about by the mining [operations] conducted by the DMC," Buenavista Barangay Chief Manuel Bantayan told the hearing.

But Romeo Pruiana, Barangay Sangay chief, said many Mancian residents would be employed if the DMC would be allowed to haul its nickel ore.

"I am for the hauling of these stockpile and for the resumption of the mining operations as well. It helps to provide job other than fishing and hauling," he said.

Pruiana said that last December, he worked at the DMC as an "ore loader" and received a salary of P100 per day.

He also defended claims that the mining operations on their island had resulted in environmental destruction.

The Mancian Island is the second largest in the municipality of Cataingan. It has four barangays—Buenavista, San Jose, Buenavista and Buenavista.

In 1991, the DMC was granted a permit to mine for nickel in Mancian for 25 years and initially started mining ores of 3,104.55 hectares. Nickel is one of the primary minerals used in stainless steel manufacturing.

Its president, Salvador Zamora II, is a brother of Bob Zam Rep. Rolando Zamora.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Editor Jun Bandayan
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmirano

Mayors unite to conserve Taal Lake

TAAL Lake as viewed from Tagaytay City

By Mel Magsino-Gabo
Sta. Teresita, Batangas

TAAL, the deepest lake in the Philippines and the third largest with an area of 23 sq km, is being threatened by large-scale illegal fishing, inappropriate development for tourism and settlement on the Tagaytay ridge, and solid waste and agricultural runoff.

A study of the Bangad Kabkasan (BK), a public interest environmental law firm, shows that the number of floating cages of cultured tilapia and bangus (milkfish) have increased, threatening endemic species in the lake and creating pollution.

Decaped fish feeds are depleting the lake's supply of dissolved oxygen, it says, while discarded feed bags litter the waters.

The study warned that tapping a billion cubic meters of lake water for irrigation and urban use could weaken the ecosystem, which supports a variety of marine life, and restrict aquatic migration.

Realizing urgent action to counter the threats, mayors of the 14 towns and three cities surrounding Taal signed a covenant to conserve and protect one of the world's most active volcanoes on Jan. 20 at the Sta. Teresita municipal covered court.

The move, pursued by the TK, aimed to ensure pollution control, regulated conversion of fish cages, and the appropriation of illegal fishers in the lake. Hopefully, the measures will result in the return of endemic fishes that have been on the country's list of vanishing species for decades.

Lemery Mayor Peter, TK area director, said the covenant should have been signed several years ago, but he was positive that the effort was not yet too late.

Signatories

Mayor Hilma Santos Recto of Lipa City was the first to sign the covenant on Jan. 13. Other city mayors who signed it are Abraham Valentino of Tagaytay and Alfredo Corona of Talisayan.

The rest of the mayor signatories were Alcestorio Martinez of Agoncillo, David Pamplona of Balete, Danilo Amatorio of Mataas na Kahoy, Adel Sta Maria of Sta. Teresita, Guillermo Reyes of Alitagtag, Enrique Comia of Cuenca, Cristina Reyes of Malvar, Napoleon Arceo of San Nicolas, and Wenceslao Bautista Jr. of Talisay.

Batangas Gov. Armando Sanchez challenged the local chief executives to put their promises into action.

"When you signed that covenant to conserve Taal Volcano, you have already committed yourself," Sanchez told the mayors in a speech.

"In Batangas, your word means action because your governor wants things done so they should be done on the days of broken promises," he added.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor was represented by the regional director, Emerito Salabo.

Taal Lake

Taal Lake is located within a complex volcanic area. A small volcanic island lies in the middle of the lake, which has been the site of 33 documented volcanic eruptions since 1572.

The island is a main crossing site for tourists from the Tagaytay ridge and Mt. Maculot.

Taal Volcano itself has a lake of its own inside the crater.

A 1927 fish inventory of Taal Lake identified 76 migratory species and many endemic species. But a 1995 study showed only 18 species of migratory fish and only four endemic fish species remaining in the lake.

In 2002, the volume of catch, which mainly being found only in Taal Lake and which the fishermen used to catch by the tons, had been reduced to less than a thousand.

The sardine fish was the first to die due to frequent temperature changes and water pollution brought by massive feeds to the big fish cages.

Freshwater shrimp used to thrive in the lake before they were totally driven away as a result of overfishing in the 1950s.

Ross Mayo, regional director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, said 50 percent of the fish feeds settled at the bottom of the fish cages. When the feeds rot, they deplete the oxygen level of the waters, threatening fish species.

Aside from the marine, the endemic fishes that are endangered are the dalag or ayu shake, mulpito (Endemic: mandaue), igat (Dendrocaca mel), the three millimeter pygmy goby (Mesitoc pygmaeus), ayta and yagos (Endemic: pisaeus), and the parsa and ayu, very tiny species of the shake.

Protected landscape

The government declared Taal Lake a national park on July 22, 1967, through Presidential Proclamation 235.

In 1996, it was declared a protected landscape under the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

Three lake-wide institutions authorized by different laws share the governance of the lake. These are the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) under the protected area law, the Integrated Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Board under the Fisheries Code, and the Lakewide Development Council.

But the only entity that has undergone a management planning was the Presidential Commission on Tagaytay Taal in 1993, which was abolished in 2000 allegedly because the PAMB had already been created.

Because of the number of management bodies exercising overlapping jurisdictions over the lake, they are unlikely to make any dent on the major issues affecting it.

The Kilusan ng Mahihi na Bangkupa da sa Lawa ng Taal, a lake-wide organization, has also been helping to conserve the lake during the last 10 years.

Did Roldan's girlfriend try to commit suicide?

From page A1

were anything but serious since Wang was already set to be discharged from the hospital anyhow, Angkiy said.

In an interview with reporters, Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Aglipay confirmed that Wang had indeed been hospitalized. He did not say why.

"Suicide for Wang is in the hospital and I asked our lawyers to meet the parents of the chief PNP to subpoena her to be present for my investigation here in Camp Crame," Aglipay said.

Sought for comment, another senior police official close to Aglipay confirmed the fine from medical.

"No, it's true," he told the Inquirer. "We have detailed inquiry [personnel] at the hospital to ensure her safety."

The PNP is apparently bent on keeping Wang alive to allow her to shed light on the abduction of a 3-year-old boy on July 8.

Aglipay's statement to the subpoena because Wang could not be arrested without a warrant based on bogus charges filed against her.

Police intelligence chief, Brigadier Robert Delfin, had said it was Wang, close friend and former subordinate of the boy's mother, who had "lured" Roldan into the kidnapping business. (Story on Page A11)

Delfin identified Wang as Roldan's girlfriend, an allegation vehemently denied yesterday by his lawyer Inocencio Pamelo.

"No, it's not true," Pamelo told the Inquirer. "She's just a family friend. Dennis is a very lucrative boyfriend and a loving father. His children are him as their idol."

Roldan is wanted in Lali Imperial, a former Indonesian model in the "No and relatives of designer Eliza Moreno.

Pamelo maintained to turn the tables on Roldan's accusers, claiming his client was merely a victim of a "frame-up" purportedly designed by his political enemies.

"It appears that his political enemies are at work here," Pamelo claimed. "I believe he's concocting his business because he's planning a political comeback in the near elections."

Focused on business

Contrary to reports, Pamelo claimed that Roldan, Quezon City Director III congressman from 1992 to 1995, was never addicted to gambling but was in fact "focused on his business."

These businesses, supposedly outside an 18-hectare mango farm in Zambales, is best known in the same province, and a restaurant in Kamias, Quezon City, which officers are still tracking down for more tracing.

Having been "falsely" accused of kidnapping, Roldan is planning to file the PNP with a barrage of criminal and human rights cases against the search, Pamelo said yesterday.

The lawyer said he was now preparing to file charges of theft, "Well, tell us, 'Hah! The Chinese, that's Daddy Cielo, that's Mommy Nelly,'" the Delfin said.

Safety outside country

At one time, when Dennis Roldan and the other members of the alleged kidnapping group were presented at a press conference, they might have made another confession.

"I'm not really afraid," the Delfin said. "What I can't say is that when my son sees these people in TV he gets afraid," he said.

The father said he was planning to take his family abroad where they would be safe.

"We do have plans to get out of the country, but when the time is ripe, I mean, you see, we would be leaving," he said.

Asked if he and his wife would totally quit the family business and the office around, the father said yes.

Suzette pal of kidnapped boy's mom since nursery

From page A1

Private business

But Suzette's access to the intricacies of the family business had been cut off long before the end of her alleged boyfriend, former Rep. Dennis Roldan, figured in the kidnapping case, said the top boy, according to friend of Suzette's family.

"She was relieved of all past duties in the company because apparently all the financial records were not being found. Still in a total mystery," Angkiy told reporters.

How close is Suzette to the mother?

Birthday gifts

She and the boy's mother exchanged gifts during Christmas. She would send gifts during the boy's birthday, he said.

Before the mother changed her phone number in December last year, Suzette was among the very few who immediately knew the new number, according to the friend.

They are not, however, business associates, he said.

Midnight call

The friend disclosed that three days before he saw Suzette at Pasig City, Suzette called his wife around midnight—something he found unusual.

"[She] invited her to go down to a restaurant nearby," he said.

His wife declined the offer because it was already late.

The two women had met earlier two months ago when they went to a restaurant in Libis, Quezon City. Both women had brought their children to the restaurant.

The father said he, his wife and their children were at the restaurant had a billing call.

Rolex watch

Wang called the child's family on Sunday, hours after the boy was reunited, he said, who has name was being dragged into the case, the friend's father said.

"Is there a problem?" he quoted Suzette as saying.

Suzette's voice was not angry, according to Mr-Ann Dy, president of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, a group formed by former kidnap victims.

"She was ... not angry but [her voice] was questioning," Dy said. "Apparently, she told [the mother] [the] and Dennis (Roldan) had been separated for a month or a month and a half and she has nothing to do with it (kidnapping)."

At one point during his conversation with the mother, Suzette asked why Roldan was being accused when the police had no arrest warrant for him, Dy said.

"In that same phone call, she revealed to the mother that Dennis' Rolex [watch] was missing," Dy said.

The question, according to Dy, is how Suzette came to know all those.

Traumatized

He said the child had been traumatized by the abduction. "When he sees people he sees, and the map he sees is not the line the way he used to," he said.

"[When] he tries to keep his eyes down when he sees," he said.

Apparently, his abductor had cowed the boy into sitting obedently.

The child has also been sleeping in a bent position—a clear sign of trauma.

Angkiy said when the son is ordered to the bag he stopped to face in a corner of the family home.

"A child psychiatrist told me that because of his age, he does not know that he has been cured. Every day, we have to let him know that he has been saved," Angkiy he said.

Scarred for life

Angkiy also said the board that the boy might be "scarred for the rest of his life."

Police he interviews TV for would at times point to the abductors. "Hah! Tell us, 'Hah! The Chinese, that's Daddy Cielo, that's Mommy Nelly,'" the Delfin said.

Safety outside country

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Gov't: MNLF must disarm first before dev't projects

From page A1

autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Executive Secretary Edwardo Ermita yesterday said about 7,000 MNLF fighters had been retrained and integrated into the military and police forces after the rebel group ended its decades-old rebellion in 1996.

But a big number of MNLF fighters and commanders have refused to turn in their firearms, according to Ermita. He did not say how many firearms were still being held by the MNLF.

Aid in pipeline

As a result, millions of dollars in foreign development aid pledged by countries belonging to the Organization of the Islamic Conference are held up in the pipeline because the MNLF had emerged on its commitment to disarm, according to officials.

A bailout plan to joint MNLF leaders and former ARMM Gov. Hon Misuari is mooted at a two-week rebellion in Jolo early this month that left at least 20 soldiers and scores of rebels dead. Abu Sayyaf bandits also took part in the clashes that displaced 50,000 people.

"Their firearms are supposed to be turned in in exchange for development," Ermita, the adviser of the government panel that negotiated the 1996 peace agreement, told reporters.

"They are very impatient that the development projects that are to be placed in their community are not yet there but they do not want to turn over their firearms," he added.

1st phase implemented

Ermita said the first phase of the peace agreement involving the military aspect had been implemented.

"I would say that we have implemented between 70 and 80 percent of the second phase, which is rehabilitation and development," he said, citing foreign aid that Manila had channeled to the ARMM after 1996.

Ermita said that the rest of the development projects had not yet been carried out owing to the lack of government funds.

But he added that "not only the Islamic community, but the world community, the World Bank, Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia and others have set aside funds for the economic development of Mindanao. If only the MNLF would surrender their firearms in exchange for development."

No casualties yet

Ermita also said the government was studying calls for a cessation of hostilities between the military and the MNLF faction identified with Misuari, who is currently detained at a police camp in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, on rebellion charges.

Gov. Gov. Jose de Venecia and a bloc of Muslim lawmakers have endorsed calls by Muslim and business leaders for a stop to the fighting in Jolo.

Ermita said Malacañang was awaiting a cessation notice from Lieutenant Government Aurelio Gria Jr. on when a ceasefire could be called.

In a talk with reporters, however, Gria said the military was expected to accomplish its mission in Jolo "in a few more days." He did not mention any plan to implement a ceasefire.

In Camp Aguinaldo, the Armed Forces information chief also said the military was not inclined to halt hostilities now after gaining ground against the MNLF rebels and Abu Sayyaf bandits.

"We want to continue the operations against them, the enemy is getting weaker. What we are collapse, we want to do that will be gone by hidden ops, we will follow," Lt. Col. Bonifacio Postrel said in a press conference.

More clashes

In Zamboanga City, the Southern Command chief reported clashes between army soldiers and Abu Sayyaf bandits in Patikul, Jolo, at 9:15 a.m. yesterday. No figures of casualties were given.

The clash came a few days after the Abu Sayyaf gunmen beheaded and killed three soldiers, also in Patikul.

Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said yesterday's clash was triggered by a military clearing operation in the Kuraman complex, one of the more than 18 days of intense fighting.

Braganza said the military was not sure if the Abu Sayyaf gunmen had suffered casualties in the Kuraman complex, one of the more than 18 days of intense fighting.

FIGHTING beat rolls off from a prison wharf at sunset from Zamboanga. Fighting in one part grew by 5.43 percent last year as agitators and fatalities remain the country's main source of likelihood. AP/File

Misuari's assurance

In a separate press conference, De Venecia said that Misuari had assured him that the ongoing conflict in Jolo would not spread to the Mindanao mainland and that he would welcome all forms of peace initiatives on the government.

De Venecia said Misuari's assurance was contained in a letter the MNLF founder had sent through the House special committee on peace, reconciliation and national unity chaired by Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo. Another letter was handed over by Misuari's wife, Tahmia, to MNLF commanders in Mindanao.

"Our first task is to prevent the spread to mainland Mindanao and I have the written assurance of Nur Misuari that he will do the same. I think we are moving forward," De Venecia said.

Ermita earlier accused Misuari of ordering the attack through his cell phone from his detention quarters in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, chief of staff, revealed the allegation in a special committee hearing chaired by Ocampo on Tuesday held in Fort Bonifacio.

Chief Supt. Marcelino Franco, director of the Armed Action Force, in charge of pursuing the rebel, also discussed it would be difficult for Misuari to talk with MNLF commanders through his cell phone without the knowledge of the six INP operatives guarding the jailed rebel leader.

"We always presume that we have an operative with him every time he uses his phone. Even during his private conversations with whomever he is talking to," Franco told the lawmaker.

According to Misuari's details before the House committee hearing, Foreign Secretary Ignacio Bunye said he didn't expect the jailed Moro leader to admit his participation in the attacks.

Muslim lawmakers earlier said the fighting was precipitated by the maneuver of a family by Army soldiers. The military has denied the charge.

Peace initiative

In his press conference, De Venecia announced a House of Representatives peace initiative to give priority to the consideration of 1,000 pending bills in Congress to entice MNLF fighters to agree to a ceasefire.

He said the Jolo hostage project would commence 150,000 hostage tents, cattle-herds, or agreed upon with Vice President Noli de Castro, who is also the hostage secretary.

At least 82 congressmen have agreed to give part of their grant-aided pork barrel allocation to finance the hostage-housing program.

De Venecia said he had asked Deputy Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the former MNLF commander in Sulu, and Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong, to help in the Misuari's peace initiative in Jolo.

Major breakthrough

De Venecia pointed out that since the signing of the 1996 peace agreement, only 2,4 bases in Jolo have been in benefit situations.

"In these 2,000 bases to be built in Jolo will represent a major breakthrough. I discussed this with President Macapagal-Arroyo who has given her full support to the program in Jolo and in a course of Muslim Mindanao," De Venecia said. *With reports from Aziz S. Alipala and Mark B. Madamba, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Marlon Ramos, PDI South Luzon Bureau; Alexis Papa and Christine D. Avendaño and Cynthia Balana in Manila*

Gov't eyes Saudi exile for Misuari

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

DELE in Saudi Arabia is one of the options being considered for jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari but Malacañang has yet to decide on it, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said yesterday.

Gonzales was commenting on Lower del Sur Rep. Benjamin Mamarambato's statement that ranking government officials had offered exile to Misuari. Mamarambato first made the remark on Tuesday at a press briefing held after a hearing conducted by the House special committee on peace, reconciliation and national unity or Ocampo Ocampo in Laguna, where Misuari is detained on rebellion charges.

"There is no policy decision on that. That option is just one of the scenarios being discussed, but there is no decision [on yet]," Gonzales said in a phone interview.

He said "many people" were "displaying the issue." But he stated that his office was moving them, or that he was one of the officials who broached the choice Misuari.

Gonzales and Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. visited the ex-chair of the Moro National Liberation Front in his detention cell shortly before the May 2004 presidential election. But Gonzales could not recall whether the exile proposal was brought up during that visit.

Big headache

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, chair of the House special committee, said exile was offered to Misuari "long before" the end-term of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo government troops and a group of MNLF rebels early this month.

"The office was made by government officials, and one of them, according to Misuari, was Speaker De Venecia," Ocampo has said.

Noel Albano, De Venecia's spokesperson and House deputy secretary general, declined to comment, saying "Gonzales is our top immediate option."

In the same boat

Asked if he would recommend exile for Misuari, Gonzales said: "I cannot comment at this point. In the first place, we do not know if South Dakota will accept him."

Besides, Misuari is in the same boat as detained President Joseph Estrada, whose fate is in the hands of the courts, Gonzales said, adding:

"Once action on Misuari will be based on what the courts will do. If he will be granted bail, for instance, what will he do while he is on bail?"

But Gonzales said he was not rejecting the idea of exile for the former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"It will depend on the situation in Sulu," Gonzales said. "Once that is resolved, we will see what the situation of the MNLF is, and what the role of Misuari is. Then we will make a recommendation."

But in Mamarambato's opinion, "if exile would mean lessening tension in Mindanao, I would be all right. It would be better for Mindanao to go on exile."

Gonzales said the did not know if President Macapagal-Arroyo would be receptive to the idea of sending Misuari away.

Ms. Arroyo's spokesperson, Ryan Sorsogon Lysander Bayan, convened a skeleton problem on the matter: "[Misuari] would have to undergo the [court] process here first."

With reports from Carlos Robin in Manila; Alexis Romero, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

METRO

Text us your feedback: inquirer metro@sms.ph (Globe) or 293 (Smart) Editor Evan G. Dizon ■ Assistant Editor Carmen R. Rita Jr.

Police stop jeep-load of bomb components

By Nancy C. Carvajal

ALTAGRACIA intercepted in Lamitan City on Tuesday night a large cache of explosives, which police feared could have fallen into the hands of national extremists.

Southern Police District Chief Wilfredo Garcia said the jeep-load of explosives belonging to Metro Boiler Company Inc. only had to be pulled out.

"Given the present situation, these explosives would fall into the wrong hands," Garcia said.

Bound in the jeep were 2,000 kilos of ammonium nitrate, 100 sticks of dynamite, 20,000 blasting caps, thousands of feet of detonating cord and safety fuse.

According to Garcia, thousands of bombs could be made out of the materials.

He said the jeep-load of explosives was from Bataan and was on its way to Cotabato when it was stopped by patrolling barangay along Naga Road.

"The jeep driver and his police escort were detained pending verification of the documents they presented to the police.

Garcia said they would release the jeep with its contact upon presentation and verification of the necessary documents.

'Queen,' 2 cop-aides fall

By Leila B. Salaverria

A WOMAN caged for authorities as a "queen" of illegal recruiters was arrested on Tuesday with two policemen and a former National Bureau of Investigation agent, who all acted as her security escorts.

Suspect Rosemarie Limsiong was given the label because she had illegally defrauded 5,000 prospective overseas workers of some P3 billion, according to officials of the Presidential Anti-Illegal Recruitment Task Force (Pacrf).

The number of known victims is expected to rise with the news of Limsiong's arrest, said Pacrf deputy chief Jo Tuga. Coronado Colonel.

Colonel said Limsiong was arrested at about 3 p.m. on Tuesday after a brief chase along the Roxas-Ayala Macapagal Boulevard in Pasay City.

The official added that a shootout almost occurred as Limsiong, along with her security escorts, tried to flee from arresting Pacrf officers.

However, the task force agents outmanoeuvred the suspects, who were repeatedly forced to surrender.

The Pacrf identified the escorts of security escorts as PO3 Ochoa the brothers of the Western Police District, PO3 Rodolfo Magsaysay of the National Capital Region Police Office, and Jose Nepa, now while confidential agent of the NBI.

Seized from them were a handgun and two Toyota Revos with the license plates "PNP MG."

Colonel said the Pacrf would investigate whether any other law enforcement official was working with Limsiong. So far, they have learned that one of her vans was owned by a certain "Capt. Bautistacing."

Investigators revealed that Limsiong allegedly duped most of her victims through her recruitment agency Conference Corporation in Makati City.

Colonel said her agency had a license from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, but she had no job orders and was allegedly unable to send a single worker abroad. She had been operating her agency for about five years.

According to Colonel, Limsiong must called clients who came from all over the country since banding cases about P100,000 each for placement and other fees.

A daughter's painful quest may have answered prayer

By Ros Horjan-Alonzo
Correspondent

A BOUQUET of flowers offered by friends of Nina Robles-Lizza for her mother, Maria Robles. At left, Nina at 12 with mother Maria in happier times.

TERRE, a pain in Ramon Lizza's eyes when he talks about his mother, Encarnacion "Nina" Robles-Lizza, and the unanswered questions he still anguishes over six decades after the end of World War II.

Nina and her mother Maria Robles, a beautiful Spanish mestiza born in La Castellana, Negros Occidental, lived on Muñoz Street, Ermita, after Nina's daughter, Champaca "Jojoba" left the family.

Maria Lizza worked at a casino on Roxas-Ayala Street run by a Mr. Del Rosario and Carl Rosa, a German national. The gambling establishment was first set up at the Dalaya Apartments on Taft Avenue, but had to be moved frequently to avoid the prying eyes of the Japanese.

On Feb. 2, 1945, at approximately 5 p.m., Japanese soldiers raided the gambling club and took everyone away for questioning, including Maria, a Mr. Yang (a said a pregnant lady who could have been Maria Allen?) Reyes, Mr. Sison, manager of the casino (when it was raided, but he called my mom to answer her that every one would be released in the morning," Ramon said, quoting his mother's recollection of the incident when she was just 11 years old.

Japanese soldiers later picked up Mr. Sison, and he was never heard of again," Ramon remembered. "The men dug only my grandmother's bayan and my mother's bayan in the Mandaluyong area.

Despite extensive searches, Maria was never found. No one at the University of Sto. Tomas, Fort Santiago, La Salle or other campus holding prisoners of war of the Japanese could provide any kind of information about her.

Within days, Nina was left virtually an orphan. Her only relative, Nana Robles, a cousin, was unable to help her.

Maria's best friend, Pepe Malamis, and her parents later raised Nina like their own. Nina and Nina stayed each other like sisters, and even rarely spat. "Na this was the maternal grandmother we didn't have," recalled Ramon. "Nina was husband, Pepe Cabaccan passed away. Tita Rosy lived with mom and my Dad, Manuel, until she passed her son in Spain two years ago."

Childhood memories

Now a widow, the 73-year-old Nina shares a lovely home with Ramon in Brisbane, Australia, where her family migrated 35 years ago with her husband and her children.

Nina admits she has had a blessed and bounded life. But it is still not a life she can describe as complete. The heartbreaking memories of her childhood remain fresh in her mind.

Her lifelong search for her mother through correspondence and telephone calls, for details behind her disappearance had been filled with anxiety, dead ends and a lasting glimmer of hope.

On a recent trip to Manila, Ramon and Nina tried to relive Maria Robles' steps on that fateful day when she disappeared with the use of a Metro Manila map. But she could not remind me to be difficult and frustrating.

"We were going around in circles since all the street names had been replaced with entirely different ones," remembered Ramon. "Mom also wrote Newspaper publisher Max Soliven for assistance, just a shot in the dark sort of thing. Mr. Soliven being a famous newspaper man with good connections. I can only guess that he didn't receive the letter because she never got a reply."

Late year, Nina came across the book "By Sword and Fire" by Alfonso Aluit about the destruction of Manila during the battle for the liberation of the city from the Japanese from February to March 1945. She recognized 84 percent of the names and places he had mentioned in the book, and had seen Mr. Aluit's letter pleading for his assistance. So, too, didn't ignore the same reason.

Coincidences and Closure

Nina carried the longing and frustration of having her mother disappear into entire life, but she also saw she so badly seeks might be just around the corner.

Edgar "Bobi" Kinder Jr., co-founder of The Memorare Manila 1945 Foundation that aims to remember the victims of the battle for Manila could be the key. He recently invited Nina and Ramon to attend a commemoration of the fateful day Feb. 2, 1945) from the upper floor of the Horn Apartments on Remedios Dalaya Street, where he lived with his family when he was 15. From his hiding place, he said he saw Japanese soldiers setting up road blocks in the streets.

"That was an attempt to trap those fled people like us," Bobi recalled. "The Japanese were on a rampage and no one dared to venture out of their homes. I saw Japanese soldiers push and torture groups of people out of the casino into waiting trucks. It was a horrible scene that remains vivid in my mind."

A few days later, he heard that everyone arrested at the casino were taken to the Japanese head quarters on Corinthians, and were probably killed some family members never saw any of them again.

Bobi would have been one of the last people to see Maria Robles alive. His memory of that day is the only eyewitness account there is that could make a connection between her disappearance and, probably, her death. Her relatives may have been among the other unidentified bodies found at Corinthians, or hopefully including the bodies of three British gentlemen belonging to the Executive Committee of Internees to Sto. Tomas were saved after Liberation forces took control of Manila.

Today the property where the dreaded Japanese headquarters on Corinthians's once stood is occupied by a fenced empty lot and a huge gardens center on the corner of Quirino Avenue and Makiki Street.

Sadly, only a few remember the old street name, and we may never know what exactly happened to this part of Manila 60 years ago.

But Nina Robles-Lizza finds comfort in the thought that she is getting closer to the truth.

With the help of members of The Memorare Manila 1945 Foundation, information has begun to trickle in, including a story of a painter named "Maria Bello" who reportedly died while being treated in a hospital on Feb. 28, 1945.

Last week, unknowing people came and memorize filed just a basket of flowers at the corner of Quirino Ave. and Makiki Street placed there by the family of Nina Robles-Lizza to remember those who died at Corinthians.

For any information, e-mail the author at rhalonzo@inquirer.net

Two canteens open in dispute-hit school

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FOR THE students' sake.

Teachers of the Lakandula High School in Tondo, Manila, have decided to open two temporary canteens inside the campus while they have yet to take back the school canteen they had for almost six months ago.

"Even if we only earn a little, this is just so the students would have somewhere to eat," said Ruth Hernando, head teacher of Lakandula's Home Economics (HE) department.

On Tuesday, the HE department opened two temporary canteens on campus, after the school administration shut down the school's disputed canteen run by private concessionaire Michelle Pineda until recently.

The Department of Education ordered Pineda to stop operating the canteen due to principal Rosalinda Dapital's complaints.

Pineda is contesting the Dapital order.

However, claiming that the students needed a place to eat, the teachers decided to establish their own canteens.

"We had to cater to the students. It would be dangerous for them to have to leave the campus," said Alonzagay.

Teachers turned rooms in the school's Production Center and three rooms of the HE department at Lakandula's Building 3 into small mini halls to accommodate its almost 3,000 students. The canteens serve snacks and meals.

No one to blame but Tarongoy

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE KIDNAPPING of Roberto "Boboboy" Tarongoy, a Filipino accountant abducted in Iraq, are demanding a ransom of $1 million for his release, according to a diplomatic source. The kidnappers said they would execute Tarongoy if their demand was not met.

After many weeks of captivity, there's only one reason Tarongoy is still alive: this kidnapper showed his recent video as "proof of life"). And that is that the Philippine government gave in to the demand of the abductors of Angelito de la Cruz to withdraw its humanitarian contingent in Iraq.

The withdrawal of the Philippine contingent had become an irritant in US-Philippine relations.

The government should never give in to the demand of Tarongoy's kidnappers. Why should it, since Tarongoy only has himself to blame for his fate. Filipino workers had been warned not to accept job offers in Iraq after the Da'Ta Crisis disbanded.

If the government cannot come to the aid of its hapless citizens, then it should force the Saudi Arabian Trading and Construction Co. Ltd., Tarongoy's employer, to pay his ransom. Tarongoy recruited Baghdad via Amman, Jordan. The Dawaoche was recruited through its agent in Hong Kong, Al-Construction Inc., with offices at 410 Magallanes St., Intramuros, Manila.

Another agency to be blamed for Tarongoy's hiring is war-torn Iraq is People's General Construction Corp. It reportedly received Tarongoy for P2 million for any untoward incident that could take place while he was in Iraq.

But the biggest blame should be placed on Al-Construction Inc. It sent Tarongoy to Iraq despite the ban on the deployment of workers to that country.

* * *

While the critics are throwing barbs at acting Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, the person suffering collateral damage is Teresita Jamelo, 38, a first year law student at the University of Iloilo.

Lamelo, who is suffering an Gonzalez' critics, was reportedly impregnated by the justice secretary when he was still a congressman (Iloilo).

The accusation against Gonzalez' supposed illicit affair surfaced at the confirmation hearings in the Commission on Appointments (CA). Jamelo has denied the accusation against Gonzalez, dad even if it's true, so what?

Now, point out to me any male member of the CA—and for that matter of Congress—who claims to be morally upright and I'll call you his alibi!

Why don't these righteous persons just follow Jesus Christ's admonition: He who is innocent should cast the first stone.

* * *

It would have been another story if Jamelo herself complained before the CA about her supposed affair with the justice secretary.

If Jamelo, for example, said the affair getting her pregnant, Gonzalez had abandoned her and that child, that Gonzalez' appointment should not be confirmed.

Even if the reported liaison between Jamelo and Gonzalez were true, who is to blame since it's a relationship between two consenting adults?

Questions of the Week

Do you think the proposed national I.D. system will be useful in the fight against terrorism?

Readers of it don't 20 texts as published in Tuesday's **InqBox**, *and cast votes on "Inquirer Mag's"*

Text the inquirer box
name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to
2307 (Globe) or 293 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)
Please illustrate answers can not send or RETURN.
Provincial answers can text.
Inquirer will randomly/mailing address
in 2307 or 293 as first answer will be mailed to them.

SPORTS

Editor Teddy G. Molondres

Reyes, 'Jeff Bata' keep All-Filipino bids afloat

BATA: I needed to win.

By Marlon Bernardino, contributor

EFREN 'Bata' Reyes and Jeffrey de Luna, good neighbors belonging to different eras, began their search out of the losers bracket with victories over separate foes yesterday in the Super All-Filipino Billiards Open at the SM Pasay Billiards Hall in Cross Roads Commonwealth.

Reyes, the legendary veteran known worldwide as the Magician, pummeled an overmatched Edgar Ando, 9-2, to bounce back from a stunning defeat to Antonio Gabica the other night.

"I needed to win because I was coming off a loss," said the soft-spoken Reyes.

The 50-year-old de Luna, the youngest qualifier in the 24-million event, plastered the 50-year-old Dolorito Dy 9-5.

Bata was scheduled to play Joshua "Joy Boy" Lim, a 9-2 winner over Pedro Bunao also yesterday in prematch. De Luna was also set to face Cesar Sala, who signed down Allan, 9-5.

Late Tuesday night, Bataleon, the reigning world pool champ, beat Sala 9-6, to set a rematch against Dy today.

De Luna, known in the hoodoo crazy billiards circuit as "Jeff Bata" because of his penchant for magical shots made famous by Reyes, trailed Dy, 2-5, after eight games. But a crucial 3-ball run in the 14th frame sealed Dy's doom.

Reyes lost the big-and the first frame but rushed up with two straight wins on the way to victory in the event backed by Ginebra, Talk 'N Text, Mizu, Mark and Champion and held under the aegis of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines under its president, Jesse Sipacio, in partnership with billiards partner Antonio "Peach" Pagar and Arcadio Mock Sioco.

PEC names Velasco, pinoys consultants /A21

WHAT'S INSIDE

Tamaraws test Lancers in C-League semifinals /A24

Raptors make Carter look bad /A20

Morales uses herbs, acupuncture to get ready for Pacquiao

MORALES (left) undergoes acupuncture treatment from Doctor Ki.

Sabrina L. Lagunday, Contributor

PEREZ Manny Pacquiao is using Thai herbs in his training. Former three-division world champion Erik Morales has resorted to alternative medicine in his bid to attain the best shape possible for the March 19 showdown against the Filipino fully at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Morales and his team, based in the high-altitude Obsan Mountain in Mexico, underwent an alternative medicine session yesterday under Korean doctor Jae Min Ki, who is an expert in acupuncture, therapeutic massage, aromatherapy and moxibustion.

"There is no better medicine than the one produced by the human body," explained Ki. Ki to BoxCastle. Ki was accompanied to Morales' lair by Rolli uncle Jacobinus Morales and Nicolas Rosas.

"The purpose is to avoid diseases and enter into a state of balance," said Ki. Ki said the physical recovery done to which Morales is exposed is his daily training," Ki added.

The Korean doctor applied an herbal treatment dubbed Tuina Magna, a plant which originates in South Korea and serves as alternative to pain killer.

Dr. Ki placed a pair of Magna containing acupuncture tips behind like a lighter around Morales' knees which has off therapeutic action when lighted. The Korean doctor also did acupuncture on Morales.

Reception, for his part, has been photographed using Thai herbs—which resemble the pot that is being used by the Filipino icon in his spare time—to further strengthen his shoulder and upper body muscles.

Daylo, Silva enter Palawan Open tilt

EL NIDO National Open champion Bill Darwin Laylo and Wacom Alex lead the roster of the 2005 Palawan Open chess championship starting Saturday at the Puerto Princesa City Gymnasium.

"This will be a good practice for my campaign in the United States this May," said Laylo, lead coach of SIT Taiwanese.

The event, sponsored by the city government of Puerto Princesa through Mayor Edward Hagedorn and Vice Mayor Lucile Sarmiento, in cooperation with National Chess Federation Vice President and provincial administrator Arnel Ferrer Serrano, is open to Filipino chess players.

Residents, call Puerto Princesa City Chess Association president and tournament director Bill Ramos Sunga (0921 3558082) or NCFP director Willie Abalos (0921 4209891). AM Marbon Remandias

Retanal tops chess elims

PILLIGAN Retanal amassed top seed Richard Tyrus in the eighth and final round Saturday night to rule the Region I elimination of the 2005 National Standard Chess Championship at the Lucap City Hall basketball court.

The Pilo, a seed Retanal, pride of Mandaue City, finished with 7.5 points to take the title plus the top purse of P7,000 in the qualifiers for tournament which lured 98 participants.

Retanal, elder brother of former Philippine junior champion and National Master Blum Retanal, will advance to the semifinal round of the National Standard Chess Championship in Manila this May to select the seven-men of the country's team to the 2006 Southeast Asian Games the Philippines is hosting from Nov. 27 to Dec. 5.

Second and Bynando Genio of Manila took the scalp of John John Mendoza of Bangar to score 6.5 points, the same output of third seed Bernie Velasco of San Fernando City, Lo Gonzo and 13th seed Ronald Aliaga of Bagnio City Thus secured P3,500 each.

Bagnio City Thus secured P3,500 each.

Bagnio City Thus secured P3,500 each.

PSC names Velasco, Jalnaiz consultants

By Lemuel M. Payo

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission got a boost once more from the country's prominent athletes.

Olympic silver medalist Gretchen Velasco and former Asian Games champion Roberto Jalnaiz agreed yesterday to serve as consultants to help run the country's successful campaign in the Manila 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

Last month, PSC officer-in-charge Butch Antonio tapped former Asian sprint queen Lydia de Vega-Mercado as head of the athletes' committee.

The two amateur boxing lessons vowed to do their share in helping the ABAO here and will be working closely with De Vega-Mercado.

Velasco bagged the silver medal in the light flyweight division during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics while Jalnaiz earned a gold clinched for the Philippines in the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing by topping the bantamweight division.

VELASCO: Willing to lend a hand.

Garcia said they won't interfere in the training "but they'll be helping me check out all the athletes' preparations for the SEA Games. There won't be any any problem or tension of the athletes."

Velasco and Jalnaiz said they'll be lending their support to other sports.

"We'll look at their training and entertain their queries," said the 32-year-old Velasco, who also won a gold medal in the 1994 Asian Games in Japan.

He said he's willing to help even beyond the SEA Games. "Even up to the Olympics, we're ready to help," Velasco added.

Velasco was even near Ella Gomez gold medalist, while the 39-year-old Jalnaiz also competed in the 1988 Seoul and 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

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Nangyayari ba ito sa 'yo:

✔ Nahihirapan o nangangapos ng paghinga
✔ Naninikip ang dibdib
✔ Uba
? Kinakapos ng pang-tuition

May dinkayang gamot sa manatalong sakit

RiteMED

ADDUCUL: Eyes for awards.

Adducul wants to move out of Menk's shadow

By Jose Navarro

NORIEL Adducul has two titles under his belt in as many years with Barangay Ginebra but he continues to crave for an individual award in the Philippine Basketball Association.

But with Eric Menk the center of attraction on the Kings' roster, Adducul is beginning to doubt his chances of winning an individual accolade, something the 6-foot-6 power forward had earned several times in the past since his collegiate days.

Then, the former three-time PGAA MVP out of San Sebastian College has started to drop around his owners willing to make him one of its main pillars, a reliable source told the Inquirer yesterday.

"He (Adducul) wants to win an individual award before he retires," said the source who requested anonymity. "Unfortunately, Kaunitz's decision of sticking to sound are slim with Menk most likely to overshadow him at Ginebra."

Menk won the player of the conference award and the Finals MVP after leading the Kings to their first back-to-back crowns in the PBA Philippine Cup recently. The 6-foot-7 Menk also became Finals MVP during the Fiesta Cup crown by the Gin Kings.

Sources said the Shell Turbochargers have renewed their offerings to secure Adducul, the pride of Tagaytay City in exchange for Billy Mamaril and Chali Ortigas.

The same source added that the Pedro Eugenio boys also have standing feelers, opening their trade lines with the Kings to acquire the former Metropolitan Basketball Association and Philippine Basketball League MVP.

Adducul, whose contract with the Kings will expire next year, will be a name up in Charities' grand draw drive in the import-spend conference next month despite his monstrous two-three shooting.

Meanwhile, Red Bull signed up PBL veteran playmaker Warren Bonsato to a two-year contract as replacement for Bruno Lopez, whom the Bombo skipped to San Miguel Beer in exchange for Bryan Sobol.

Coca-Cola also hopes to strengthen its backcourt by signing up free-agent Eugene Tan to a one-year contract before the start of the inter-board conference dated March 4.

Tamaraws test Lancers in C-League semifinals

FEU's Dennis Miranda (8) leads UP's Ricky Santos during a rebound bomb in their game won by the Tamaraws Tuesday. [illegible]

[illegible]

THE CURRENT Collegiate Champions League is becoming a lot like a reunion for the Pawnbrok Hotdogs of the early 90s.

[illegible]

Training pool begins final workouts

[illegible]

Del Monte entries top Delo 4x4 meet

[illegible]

RP gymnasts start American Cup campaign

[illegible]

SPORTSWATCH

Freedom Cup tomorrow at SLLP

[illegible]

P. Princesa hosts officiating seminar

[illegible]

Largahan E-cock blasts off Saturday

[illegible]

[illegible]

Why the PAL Interclub is a favorite

SPECTATOR

ALEX MARANAN

[illegible]

'Sluggish' Safin bows out in Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Marat Safin, playing his first match since winning the Australian Open three weeks ago, was beaten Tuesday in the opening round of the $1 million Dubai Open, eliminated by Germany's Nicolas Kiefer, 7-6 (2), 6-3.

SAFIN

Safin looked sluggish and was admittedly uncomfortable against the 30th-ranked Kiefer.

Kiefer "was playing the kind of game that doesn't give you any sort of rhythm," the second-seeded Russian said. "Chipping and charging, slicing and spinning and changing the pace."

In the day's marquee match, Tim Henman missed six match point and rallied to beat Greg Rusedski, 6-8, 7-6 (7), 6-4, for his fifth straight victory over his fellow Briton.

Kiefer, the 2000 Dubai champion and a runner-up finalist in the United Arab Emirates, earned grudging applause from a capacity crowd, which overwhelmingly supported Safin.

"It is never easy against Marat," Kiefer said. "He is one of the top players in the world and has just won the Australian Open. So yes, I am very happy with my game today."

Safin never appeared in control and realized Kiefer his equalizing.

"Maybe has a lot of experience. He was I wasn't very comfortable on the court and he seized the moment," Safin said. AP

Raptors make Carter look bad

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—The sight of his old teammates made Vince Carter look like the player the Toronto Raptors wanted to get rid of.

Carter struggled in his first game against the team that traded him to New Jersey earlier this season, missing 17 of 25 shots while being outplayed by Jalen Rose in Toronto's 100-82 victory over the Nets on Tuesday night.

"We probably won a little tired from all-star weekend," Rose said of Carter. "While he was running up and down the court throwing it off the backboard, I was laying on the bench drinking a fruity drink with an umbrella."

"So I probably gave myself an unfair advantage on that one."

Rose shot 12-for-15, scored 30 points and did a fine defensive job on Carter.

"It's disappointing, the way we played," Carter said. "It's always a concern coming out of the all-star break here your team makes its comeback after the break. It looked OK early, it got worse the rest of the night."

Rose led the Raptors on a 14-4 run early in the fourth quarter, and New Jersey never recovered. Chris Bosh had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and Mike Peltier added 13 points for Toronto, which had six players in double figures.

Carter scored 21 points, and Jason Kidd added 20 for the Nets.

In Orlando, Florida, Jermaine O'Neal scored 20 points in 22 minutes, and Fred Jones added 18 points as Indiana downed the Magic, 108-94.

Jermaid Dunleavy returning from a foot injury, had 13 points and six assists. He scored all but two minutes of the previous eight games.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Richard Hamilton and Stephen Primo each scored 19 points and Detroit beat New York, 97-86, for its fifth straight victory and 20th in 31 games.

Chauncey Billups added 15 points and eight assists, and Rasheed Wallace had 12 points, eight rebounds and four blocks. Jamal Crawford had 23 points for the Knicks, who fell to 2-20 in 2002.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Michael Redd scored 30 points on 13-of-24 shooting in his return to Milwaukee's lineup as the Bucks beat the Bobcats, 112-102.

Redd, sidelined the last three games due to a sprained index finger, scored 14 points in the fourth quarter to break open a close game and help the Bucks snap a two-game losing streak. Brevin Knight led Charlotte with 19 points.

In Houston, Ray Allen scored 29 points, capped by two freethrows with 16.7 seconds left, to help Seattle stop the Rockets' winning streak at eight games with an 89-85 thriller.

Houston had a chance to tie it with 5 seconds left, but Scott Padgett's 3-point attempt was short and Allen came up with the rebound.

In Chicago, Ben Gordon hit four 3-pointers in the fourth quarter and sparked an Bulls with 20 points as the Bulls edged Miami, 100-102.

Miami center Shaquille O'Neal did not return after straining his left knee in a fall in the opening minutes. Jermaine Jones was negative and he will be re-evaluated before the Heat's game against Indiana on Wednesday night.

In Sacramento, California, Chris Webber scored 30 points, Mike Bibby had 23 and Sacramento beat Atlanta, 114-104, for just its second victory in eight games.

Brad Miller had 16 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists for the Kings.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant and Lamar Odom each scored 21 points, and Chris Mihm had 19 points and 15 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers downed Boston, 104-93.

Paul Pierce and Ricky Davis scored 23 points each for the Celtics. AP

NEW JERSEY star Vince Carter (left) for a bullet-like dunk against Toronto forward Chris Bosh. But, don't let the fine form fool you. Carter struggled badly against his former team.

R. Luzil W. Kiamco
G. Valle J. Alba
J. De Luna R. Dy
E. Reyes E. Acaba
S. Galvez L.V. Cortes
F. Guerzarcarte A. Pagsibigan

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Rev-A-Lert's Text
FUJIMA
Cabuyao, R.C.

Gov't seen allowing dilution of SMC stake

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT will no longer participate in the coming stock rights offering of San Miguel Corp. and just allow its stake in the food and beverage giant to be diluted by 10 percent, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said yesterday.

"We don't see any urgency for that," Purisima told reporters when asked about a legislator's suggestion that the government should take part in the company's capital raising exercise and prevent a dilution of its San Miguel shareholdings.

Besides, he said the government did not have the money to purchase more shares just to keep its stake in San Miguel.

Earlier estimates said the government would have to spend about P6.3 billion if it wanted to retain its 41-percent interest in San Miguel.

Purisima admitted that although non-participation in the rights offer would lead to a dilution, this would not hurt much if, but because the state would still own a chunk of the beer-based conglomerate and will have a say in the company's decision-making.

Of the government's 41 percent stake in San Miguel, 27 percent is held by the Presidential Commission on Good Government, with the remaining 14 percent held by the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System.

Earlier, presidential economic adviser Rep. Joey Salceda said the government should participate in the stock rights offer, scheduled next month, to protect the government's stake. He said that with the intention to eventually sell the government-owned shares in San Miguel, it was necessary that the stake was protected to keep it attractive to potential buyers.

San Miguel plans to issue one new share for every 10 currently held at a price equivalent to a 5-percent discount to the average trading price of the shares from Jan. 31 to Feb. 25.

In order to ensure that their stake is not diluted in a rights issue, existing shareholders have to take up the offer. If they do not, their holding is effectively reduced, at the rate by 10 percent.

Proceeds from the rights issue would be used to refund the company's acquisitions and expansion projects.

Purisima's comments appeared to contradict earlier statements expressing an interest in participating in the Government Service Insurance System, which holds a 6.6-percent stake in San Miguel.

San Miguel's "A" shares, listed on local bourses, yesterday closed unchanged at P67, while its "B" shares, available to foreign investors, fell 50 centavos to P75.50.

Also related story on Page B3

PURISIMA

DOF to strengthen privatization program

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is putting up a team that will strengthen the government's privatization programs, saying it will make the selling of state assets one of the key strategies to inject health into the country's ailing fiscal system.

Newly-appointed Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said the objective of the DOF would be to raise as much revenue as possible from the privatization of government assets, similar to what the government did during the term of former President Fidel V. Ramos.

Purisima said the government's fiscal problem was brought largely by its worst revenue collection, noting that while revenue was equivalent to 17 percent of gross domestic product during Ramos' time in 1997, the figure dwindled over the years until it reached only 12.5 percent last year.

The new finance chief said he would bring in new people to the DOF, including one who would serve as undersecretary in charge of the privatization program. He said he would name the soon-to-be appointed finance undersecretary in a few days, and that he would be heading the members of a new privatization team.

"Privatization is important because the government needs liquidity. If we look at the success of the Ramos administration in terms of revenues generation, a large part of it was due to privatization," Purisima said in an interview after the turnover ceremonies for new Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina as the Bureau of Customs.

The finance chief said there were huge potential revenues from privatization because the government still had a lot of assets that it could sell. The government has a 41-percent stake in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. (the 14 percent held by the Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System, and the 27-percent government-sequestered stake managed by the Presidential Commission on Good Government).

Purisima said the privatization team would include the SMC shares in its priority agenda, together with government assets in the power sector.

"There are a lot more assets to dispose of, but I would like to give time [the new finance undersecretary] a free hand in identifying them," Purisima said.

"There is a substantial portfolio of government assets that we can liquidate. If we do this, then we can create more room for infrastructure, which is one of the country's major bottlenecks," he said.

Michelle V. Ramos

Inter-island transports take their toll on rural dev't

By Rosemil M. Dantonjo

THE CONTINUE inefficient, uncompetitive inter-island transport system is hampering rural development, making many the issues, the for farmers to strive for greater productivity despite advances in agro fisheries technology, according to a University of Asia and the Pacific study.

The study, conducted by the Transport and Logistics Center of the DAP-based Center for Growth and Communication, found that inadequate inefficiency had to higher prices of goods.

In turn, higher prices make income the global competitiveness of the agri-fisheries sector as well as the country's food security.

Gaston L. Sandoval of the DAP School of Economics and prices of goods were going up since because they had to go through many channels before they reach the end-consumer.

The transport, perhaps from Quezon province charge hundreds or eight times," Sandoval said. "The result is that the price shoots up from 3% each of the farm gate to a range of between 15% and 20% when it reaches the end-consumer—an increase of between 350 percent and 1122 percent."

Sandoval said that for the farmers, a multi-layered marketing system—the products going through several levels of traders, distributors and dealers—meant smaller profits.

Yet the marketing structure is irreversible, rather can back 90% agency at the farm gate and can be sold to the end-consumer at P10 each—an increase of only 10 percent," he said.

The academic explained that much of the high transport cost would be traced to the end of cargo handling, inefficient port operations and a highly centralized port administration that has hampered their strong cargo handling service expert and among different ports.

"The current port policy is flawed in that the regulator (the Philippine Ports Authority) benefits from its regulation—it owns ports and earns from operating them," Sandoval said. "Also, there is no public bidding in the renewal of expired and expiring cargo handling contracts."

Sandoval said that based on the study he recommended the promotion of roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) shipping service that would substantially reduce cargo handling costs, and make loading and unloading of goods efficient.

He also encouraged the establishment of private commercial ports that would support the ro-ro system. He said of the 600 private ports in the country, only 10 are operating commercially.

Europe firm acquires 30% of Coastal Road subsidiary

MIN DE Mal (CRM), one of the biggest dredging companies in Europe, will acquire 30 percent of UCPB Holdings (Hold. Corp. (UHPC), a subsidiary owned subsidiary of Coastal Road Corp.

The Coastal Road Corp. has announced the signing of a joint venture agreement between JDN and UHPC, closing the RTO buy-back.

JDN has completed many dredging projects in the Philippines. It is also one of the largest construction companies in Belgium, specializing in the construction of roads, reclamation and bridges.

The joint venture was signed by Jennifer M. Dimas-Bautz, general manager of UHPC and Stefan Bayens, country manager for Philippine operations, Gary Sandoval, foreign department director and Jan Bulkovitz, legal counsel.

UHPC is a joint venture partner of the Public Estates Authority. The equity and construction agreements were signed in Belgium last Feb. 16.

Leaky in love

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bawal III

I'M BIRC Times starting to run of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the BIRC, on how it implements its new rules on business.

Well, okay, actually, how the hell BIRC time means rules does not the theme of business!

Even what I gathered on the alleged "problem" of the 20-year old College Insurance Plan, or CAP, the SEC's secret is that it looks to secrets to media.

About three years ago, without much ado, thank you, the hotly SEC fell in love with insurance companies, and so it imposed new rules on their online competitors—pre-need companies like CAP.

It's a way the SEC wanted CAP to follow the rules for life insurance companies which, due to accident, must set aside money for every policy they sell. Bright!

Good, Mamaroldi, CAP was a company with some 39.7 billion in trust funds deposited in various banks. And as of 2003, its retained earnings already amounted to P7 billion. How was it to produce? Well, it was in trouble with the SEC's rules.

Under the rules, a new college plan sold by the CAP was automatically counted as a "liability," for which CAP must set aside a big portion of the plan's money.

The idea used the so-called MR, or "actual reserve liability." It turned out that the MR was the brainchild of a group known as Agile, which was based office at the SEC building.

Then Agile got a lot of hefty fees (money) from the DAP's. Whether Agile reported it entirely to an insurance group in New York, nobody knows then.

In reality, however, the MR turned out to be a stupid idea. In production of CAP's for billions for 2004, for instance, man-off by almost 50 percent.

As I have been saying, if the SEC was the doctor, and it made that kind of mistake, the patient would have been long dead, and smelling worse than my feet.

* * *

TODAY, anyway, the problem of CAP has turned into one of downward reputation. The public thinks it is going down, if it is not already down. You know, hanks up!

Yet, the business of pre-need companies like CAP, precisely, relies on public trust. I mean, you gave them money, and in return they give you a promise. If that is ever shown true, then we have a big fiasco. Pandemic.

But what I am saying is, the SEC did not have to dent CAP to tackle all this time.

The genius SEC, you see, leaked information to media about the alleged "problem" of CAP, saying that the company, by inference, had "capital deficiency."

Deficiency? Based on what? Well, as it turned out, based on the way-off wrong capital MR, that was devised by Agile with the help of some CA groups.

The genius SEC leaked information to media, without saying that CAP was preparing to contesting the rules. There was an ongoing debate between the SEC and CAP—running for three years now—about the MR.

CAP will do what it follows the SEC rules, and what's more, knowing its public reputation was at stake, it kept quiet its media. The SEC leaked everything.

* * *

AND so, what kind of an irresponsible regulator do we have to be in our novel industry?

In banking, in comparison, knowing that anything it does about any bank can start a "run," the Bangko Sentral is always careful about sharing information to media.

The central BSC, however, did the leaking itself. The SEC used the media as a weapon for questionable agenda on a company that it was supposed to supervise—not murder.

Who drew a plan somewhere?

Now, aside from the SEC's leaking info to hurt the company, certain senators stoop rode on the publicity to tell the public to stop paying for their CAP educational plans.

"Letters To The Editor" came out in different newspapers, which all said the same things, basically stating that the solution only would CAP be achieved to alleged "financial problem."

Now, I happen to know personally all the trusts in the newspapering racket, such as those "letters to the editor." They could also be orchestrated.

If the senators wanted CAP to solve its problem, so that it can proceed with its hundreds of thousands of shareholders, why then did they encourage the public to stop paying for their plan?

Simple, my dear people, and it's because they wanted CAP to go down by starting a "run." They wanted to make the alleged "problem" of CAP, as imagined by the SEC (with the help of Agile), into a reality.

I just don't know how much is the "run-run-ho" from New York.

* * *

SOME 50 doctors and dentists who have clinics in the medical building near the former site of Medical City hospital at the Ortigas Center, are crying "foul."

It seems that the management of the building, which is owned by a corporation, which in turn has the same doctors and dentists as stockholders, cut the utilities—you know, electricity, water and telephone.

Thus, some citizens who want to see their doctors at the building must go up flights upon flights of stairs to the 5th floor.

Old people are mostly weak. And you know why old weak people go to the doctors, right? They are sick.

That's the situation at the Medical building.

* * *

IT seems that the management of the building, owned all at a million, because they wanted to close down the building.

Well, some of the owners of Medical building are also the stockholders of a different medical building called MMI, or Medical Tower Inc.

MMI is the new building for doctors and dentists located near the brand new Medical City hospital at the Meralco compound on Ortigas avenue.

Some occupants of Medico transferred to MMI. Others, such as old retiring dentists, did not want to move to the new building. It seems there would cost P4 million.

So here the remaining occupants of Medico is more to Mati, and cough off P4 million each, the "management" turned off the utilities.

And there are doctors! And all along, I thought that doctors are supposed to heal sick people in our their sufferings. Well, I am not perfect.

UCPB PROPERTY MARKET

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(As of February 13, 2002)

Stocks	Open	High	Low	Close	Volume
BANKS					
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
PROPERTY					
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
SERVICES					
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HOLDING FIRMS					
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MINING					
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OIL					
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FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
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CHEMICALS					
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TEXTILES, APPAREL & LEATHER					
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PAPER					
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SERVICES					
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COMMERCIAL BANKS					
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MISCELLANEOUS					
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COMMERCIAL BANKS					
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INSURANCE					
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DISCLOSURES

EQUITABLE PCI Bank's board approved and confirmed the promotion of Lauryn Sibu T. Sicha to executive vice president effective Jan. 1.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. announced the resignation of Juan G. Santos as director effective Jan. 31. He will be replaced by Ambassador Cesar E. Buenaventura.

* * *

PCIBL Commercial Banking Corp. completed the auction sale of Korean-performing loans worth P2.1 billion to ACRC Mandala Fund L.C.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Inc. listed 5,400 common shares today under its executive stock option plan, bringing ESOP shares to a total of 382,298 common shares.

* * *

CEBEW Equities Inc. resolved at its annual stockholders' meeting from April 30 to May 31. Record date is March 31.

* * *

CEBU Property Ventures & Development Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 29, 3 p.m. at City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City.

* * *

CEBU Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 29, 10 a.m. at City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City.

* * *

MANILA Mining Corp. said its annual stockholders' meeting was scheduled for April 18 at 10 a.m. at the Penthouse, Lopezville Building, Plaza de Panay, Makati City.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. stockholder approved the increase in the company's authorized capital stock from P1.2 billion to P3.42 billion. It also approved stock dividends of 120 percent, equivalent to P1.18 billion.

* * *

RESCO Consolidated Resources & Holdings Inc. board of directors approved the increase in the authorized capital stock of the company from P5 million to P5 billion. It also approved the enrollment and registration of the listed shares with Electronic Registration System of the Philippine Association of Stock Transfer Agents and Registries subject to stockholder's approval. **Compiled by Chiee Gatuz, PDI Research**

SMC STOCK RIGHTS OFFER

Sy moves to keep board seat

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MALL magnate Henry Sy will subscribe to the P3.6 billion to P20 billion stock rights offering of San Miguel Corp. to protect his base board seat in the food and beverage giant.

The SM group will have to set aside about P1 billion to maintain its 6.3 percent stake in SMC, assuming that the SMC would raise at least P20 billion, analysts said.

"We have already met and discussed this (subscription to SMC shares)," sources in the company said.

SMC plans to issue new shares equivalent to 1.8 percent of its outstanding equity.

Sy, for his part, holds the stake in SMC through his SM Investments Corp., which is set to hold its initial public offering.

The Sy group formed the bond issue by Japanese brewer Kirin Brewery Co. Ltd. to bid to make its SMC by 4.12 percentage points to 19.67 percent. With this purchase, Kirin gets closer to clinching another seat in SMC's 15-man board.

Before the transaction, Kirin held roughly 25.6 percent, enough to win two board seats.

SMC chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., who owns close to 20 percent of the company, has yet to disclose whether he will exercise his preemptive right, which gives him the first crack at buying additional shares.

Others in the SMC board are representatives from government agencies: the Presidential Commission on Good Government (28.3 percent), Government Service Insurance System (15.5 percent) and the Social Security System (5.3 percent).

Industry analysts expect the balance of power in the country's largest food and beverage firm to change after the rights offer. As to who will keep control of the company is still uncertain.

Shares close . . .

Continued from A1

rate, dealers said.

They said investors picked up bargains among stocks with strong profit and growth prospects after sentiment was boosted when the government said it had lowered its year's budget deficit target to 3.4 percent of gross domestic product amid hopes of higher revenues.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index reversed three days of losses to add 58.51 points to 2,942.78. It traded between 2,907.17 and 3,045.95.

Turnover reached 2.6 billion shares worth P1.36 billion.

The broader all-shares index rose 10.39 points to 1,267.92.

Gainers lost losers 88 to 17, with 32 stocks unchanged.

"Selling was just too much in the previous days and that gave investors a window of opportunity to begin buying attractive stocks," Regina Capital Development Securities analyst Cesar Tan said.

Investor sentiment received a boost after the government said Tuesday that expected higher revenues would likely lead to a smaller budget deficit for the current fiscal year. **AFP**

BUSINESS

COUNCIL FOR DEBT RELIEF PROPOSED

Senator seeks selective repudiation of gov't debt

By Doris C. Dumlao

HARDLINE critics of the government, including legislators, yesterday demanded that selective debt repudiation was a better alternative to outstanding international payments than the approved third populist.

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. yesterday filed Senate Bill 1826 which sought to establish a "Council for Debt Relief" to review all loan agreements entered into by past and present Philippine governments in partially relieve the country of its burgeoning debts.

Earlier, Villar also filed a bill (SB 1818) imposing a ceiling on public sector borrowings, including contingent and assumed liabilities.

House national representative Satur Ocampo, president of militant group Bayan Muna, yesterday also said that the Philippines would be better off following Argentina's drastic measures on foreign debt relief.

"President Macapagal-Arroyo, citing Argentina, warns of an economic meltdown which we cannot survive—once we falter in debt payment," Ocampo said. "But how he related Argentina to scare the people into accepting new and higher taxes."

Villar echoed Ocampo's sentiments, saying he did not fear the Argentinian spectre.

The senator noted that the Latin American country was now only paying 24 percent of its original debts.

Villar said this was why he wanted to have a council that would study the debts—especially those that were clearly contracted in scandalous manners as there were the same with better chances of getting relief.

The senator said this should have been done in 1986, or right after the Marcos dictatorship was ousted, but it would not had to give a cry with the country's remaining bilateral lenders.

He acknowledged that it would be difficult to renegotiate the debts in the form of bonds issued to investors, mostly Filipinos or Philippine banks and entities, or outstanding bilateral loans would be prioritized.

During the forum, Villar said the country's two 40 years of relationship with the IMF and the World Bank had not resulted in a significant reduction in poverty.

Ocampo yesterday took part, along with other military groups, in the "People's and Indigenous Peoples' Consultative Assembly on the debt crisis held at the University of the Philippines.

Ocampo said that what the President did not want to talk about was the concern of international's bold unilateral decision to stop paying debts of more than $100 billion to foreign creditors.

"The fact is that its economy has grown by 4 percent for five consecutive years, its currency has stabilized and reserves (billion) have been added since 2002," he said.

Latin America pulled off these achievements by focusing all the country's resources on developing the domestic economy, which it was able to do by setting aside the economic prescription of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Ocampo stressed.

Instead of fearing what happened to the Latin American country, Ocampo thus told the Philippine must look and get inspiration from it. In line with mobilizing chance among poor economies across Africa, Latin America and Asia to stop oppressive debt payments.

"Like Argentina, much of our debt was incurred under a fascist military regime," Ocampo said. "The Marcos dictatorship chained the Philippine economy further to debt and IMF bondage. Dictators, arrogant and unelected leaders were contracted with the IMF and international creditors."

Ocampo outlined a four-pronged drastic approach to address the debt crisis which he would like the proposed to consider:

- Repudiate the policy of automatic appropriation for debt payments;
- Cancel all illegitimate and onerous debts, whether through negotiation or unilateral action starting with the loan related to the Subic Bontoc Power Plant and other Marcos debts;
- Call a moratorium on foreign debt servicing for at least five years; and,
- Conduct an audit of all public sector debts for the purpose of determining what other unpaid loans should be repudiated.

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

LGUGC Local Government Corporation

IMUS BONDS SERIES "A"
Report on the Financial Condition of the Trust Fund
as of December 31, 2004

Collections for 2004	
Sale of Bonds	P 47,800,000.00
Total Interest earned	793,908.32
Total Funds Available	47,793,908.32
Less: Total Disbursement	25,746,433.85
Funds Available (12-31-04)	P 21,957,512.47

Certified correct: Noted:

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HAFELE MYPULLS

DOE hints at oil price hike as world rates surge

By Miguel L. Ho

MOTORISTS should brace themselves for a possible oil price hike in the coming days as world oil prices again soar to near historic highs.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the benchmark Dubai crude soared to $40.09 a barrel in the spot market last Tuesday, pushing up the February average to $39.25 a barrel, $1.16 higher than the January average of $37.82 a barrel.

Unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products likewise surged to a high of $58.51 a barrel last Tuesday, almost $2 higher than the Feb. 21 spot price of $56.98 a barrel.

The February average for MOPS-based unleaded gasoline jumped by more than $5 to $52.07 a barrel from $47.06 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel also shot up in the spot market last Tuesday to $50.46 a barrel, driving up the February average to $51.32 a barrel from only $51.26 a barrel in January.

"With a few days left in February, it's unlikely that these averages will go down," Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya yesterday said.

While he hinted at a possible oil price hike due to the international price surges, he supposed to avoid all fines not to raise prices until the end of March.

World oil prices had again started to climb in light of a possible output cut by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec).

World oil prices actually softened earlier in the month after the Opec announced in mid-January that it would maintain its production at 27 million barrels a day.

But with the oil cartel expressing the possibility of seeing production before or during its March 16 meeting, international prices again had begun to jump.

The extended cold weather in northeastern United States as well as the continuing violence in the Middle East helped boost world oil prices.

Also, the government-imposed 1 percent-equivalent increase in tariffs on crude and refined petroleum products will affect local prices, an industry source said.

"Consumers shouldn't forget that the 1[illegible] percentage-point additional tariff, which has been championed by the DOE, is currently equivalent to an additional 40 centavos per liter," the source said.

Local oil firms earlier this month picked up prices of gasoline by 40 centavos a liter, diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos a liter, and liquefied petroleum gas by 40 centavos a liter mainly to reflect the tariff hike, which took effect Jan. 1.

Holcim to put up power plant

By Doris C. Dumlao

HOLCIM Philippines Inc., formerly known as Union Cement Corp., is considering putting up a 50-megawatt power plant in Mindanao for its own fuel requirements.

This was in view of the expected shortfall in power supply in the island this year.

In a press briefing yesterday, Holcim chief operating officer Paul O'Callaghan added the company would spend P100 million this year, up from P[illegible] million in capital outlay in 2000, to find ways to reduce its reliance on coal and conventional sources of electricity.

However, he said the company was concerned with regulatory uncertainties, particularly the Securities and Exchange Commission's reversal of an earlier ruling exempting Holcim's shareholder Cemex Holdings from a tender offering to minority shareholders.

O'Callaghan said he was not sure whether Cemex, which earlier took over a 51 percent stake in Holcim, would afford to comply with the tender offer requirement of the SEC. The purchase of the minority shareholders is estimated to cost P6.16 billion (Holcim's current market capitalization).

He said Cemex would not have gone ahead with the transaction if the PSE and SEC had cleared from the start that a tender offering would not be required.

"My no-know is that they (Cemex) are studying their options," said the Holcim COO, noting that going to court was an option considering that previous actions were done elsewhere.

"From the opinion of going through the order is quite unclear. There has been big concern in sale of shares as there's too much minority protection left," he said.

About 20 percent of Holcim's stake is continued to be in the hands of minority shareholders.

O'Callaghan said Holcim had resumed its profitability last year, but was having difficult challenges such as the uncertainty in power supply in Mindanao. Also, he said that there had not yet been a significant pick-up in demand for cement even if the construction sector was reported to be on the rebound.

"We're in the middle of evaluating the planned power generation project in Mindanao, where we have two cement plants and they use about 50 MW," O'Callaghan said.

As a rule of thumb, he said power generation would cost about $1 million per MW.

At present, he estimated that half of the company's operating costs represented power costs. He said the company might put up its own power plant to ensure stable supply of electricity for its operations.

He said Holcim would decide within this year whether to push through with the power plant project, as construction would take about two to three years.

Listed holding firm Berjaya Consolidated Initiatives and unit Mac Cement Corp earlier sold their combined 51 percent stake in Union Cement Holdings to Cemex, a subsidiary of Switzerland's Holcim Ltd.

But Holcim's minority shareholder Nation of Life Insurance Company of the Philippines earlier asked Cemex Holdings to buy its 15.8 percent stake in the cement firm.

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2 airlines get additional flights to RP

By Clarissa S. Balino

QATAR Airways and Gulf Air have received the go-ahead of the Civil Aeronautics Board for the increase in the frequency of their flights to the Philippines.

The two airlines can now fly daily to and from Manila, from their previous six-times-a-week schedule, a transport official said. Qatar also flies to Cebu.

With the additional flights, more travelers could avail themselves of the competitive packages from the two Middle Eastern carriers.

Accordingly, for example, Gulf Air offers a two-way trip from Manila to London for $558 while Qatar sells tickets for as low as $400 from Cebu to Doha.

"The two carriers were allowed to increase their frequency to one flight a week because based on the respective bilateral air agreements, we can increase the flights once the load factor exceeds 70 percent," the official said.

Qatar got a provisional authority for the additional flights pending the conclusion of ongoing hearings, while Gulf Air was given the final approval.

An industry source, however, is seeking clarification whether the increased in traffic volume claimed by the two Middle Eastern carriers came solely from the traffic to and from the Philippines or is considered traffic from pick-up points.

Load factor is the ratio of the space or seat sold by an airline in relation to the total available space or seats.

Qatar Airways is the national carrier of the modern Gulf State of Qatar. By the end of 2000, it said it would be flying to at least 60 destinations across Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Far East.

Gulf Air is the national carrier of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Oman. Gulf Air now flies to more than 50 destinations.

Japan investments in RP up 187%

By Raoul W. Domingo

DIRECT investments from Japan rose 187 percent to P22.38 billion last year from P8.04 billion in 2000, as Japanese trade and business interests focus in on the Philippines.

The Department of Trade and Industry said Japanese businessmen were into the local manufacturing and service ventures, particularly in the areas of information technology, software development, electronics, chemicals, communications equipment, automotive parts and health care.

Trade Secretary Jose R. Antonio said Japanese business interests on the country was still very positive and that the country's best comparative strength remained its world-class skills of workers.

Antonio said the increased inflow of investments from Japan further encouraged the government to align and adjust policies to sustain the country's position as the preferred business location and platform of operations for foreign firms in general.

"The government has adopted measures that promote macro economic stability, provides better infrastructure and improves facilities, and encourages the growth of support businesses to provide locally sourced parts and supplies for assembly companies," he said.

Antonio added that more investments from and trade opportunities with Japan were expected to be realized after the recently concluded mission from the Keizai Dozanren Federation of Kankeiren.

Kankeiren group businesses that are based in the city of Kansai such as Mitsubishi, Mitsubishi and Hitachi as well as the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

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LIFESTYLE

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MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 18U • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION

GRILLED Certified Angus Beef Strip Loin Salad with Asian-Flavored Sauce at Pholchai Grocery

Mad about angus

Consumers often think they're getti
meat upon purchase of any beef wit

Text by Anne A. Jamboro
Photos by Ryan Lim

THERE is an angus confusion. Aggressive and clever marketing has crowned angus the zenith of beef. Hence consumers often think they're getting prime meat upon purchase of any beef carrying the "angus" tag.

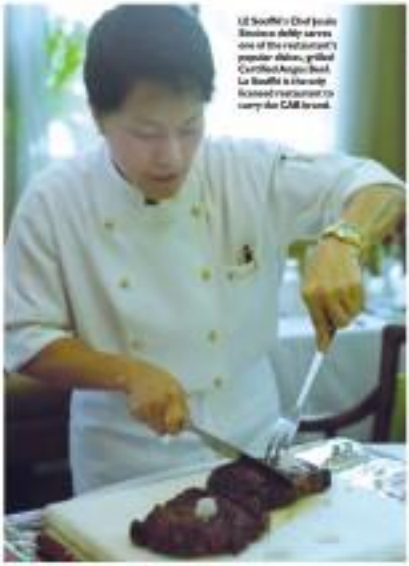
What most people don't know is that angus is just another breed of cattle, in the same way kobe beef refers to those from Wagyu cattle raised in the Kobe region of Japan. Much of angus' popularity, in fact, was generated when the American Angus Association (AAA) created the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) program in 1978.

Two years earlier, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) lowered its beef grading quality standards, making older cattle with little marbling (fat) eligible for a Choice grade.

Even the availability of beef labeled Prime by the USDA was on decline then. The CAB program was created with the aim of bringing back the high standards of beef grading. Its successful win the AAA's CAB program that it has spawned other similar programs, and soon angus was all over the place.

"People automatically think angus is good beef, but the name angus doesn't guarantee quality," says Daisuke Mizuno, senior manager-customer service/marketing of CAB/International Division. "We guarantee our product's quality as our customers."

Less than 4 percent of US beef earn the distinction CAB. That's less than one for every six angus type cattle. No being animals or herds are "certified" or named



LE SOUFFLÉ's Chef Jesús Jiménez deftly serves one of the restaurant's popular dishes, grilled Certified Angus Beef. Le Soufflé is the only licensed restaurant to carry the CAB brand.

GRILLED Certified Angus Beef Cow Sirloin Steak with Lyonnaise Buttered French Beans, Gratin and Mashed Potato (above); Creamy Lobster Bisque with Foie Sauce (left)

Mad about angus

From page C1

"Certified Angus Beef." Only the USDA, a third party and impartial organization, inspects and certifies the beef as CAB quality.

Shimojima says this ensures the brand's consistency in quality that is expected from the gourmet beef.

To qualify for CAB standards, for instance, the beef must have marbled (USDA Middle Choice) or higher marbling degree. Roughly 30 percent of USDA Choice cut pieces contain such high degree of marbling.

"Flavorful marbling, which must be finely textured, helps bring out the beef's outstanding flavor," Shimojima says. Coarse marbling is said to "negatively influence palatability" of the beef.

The CAB's higher marbling also assures that the meat remains tender and juicy even when cooked at high temperatures.

He adds that since US cattle are fed corn, not grass, the marble is white. The Australian or grass is responsible for the yellowish marbling of grass-fed cattle, such as those found in Australia. Taste-wise, CAB's is sweeter, with none of the "grassy" aftertaste of other angus beef.

Strict standards

CAB adheres to strict standards based on marbling, maturity and leanness. The CAB must be from the 'A' maturity range, the youngest classification for beef at less than 30 months.

"The younger the beef, the better. It is juicier, more tender and flavorful," Shimojima says.

USDA Prime and Choice grades, two of the highest beef grades in the market today, can include 'B' maturity cattle. These are cattle harvested at 30-42 months of age, which Shimojima dismisses as the "not so tender" variety. Only beef with superior tenderness, color and pleasing texture can earn the CAB name, he says.

"Integrity is built in every pack. The CAB brand is the only one that tracks every pound of meat from when it is initially identified until it is sold to the consumers to ensure they get genuine CAB products," Shimojima says.

Superior marbling that eliminates dairy in Japanese is said to deliver a "uniform plate presentation," and zero blood spots or flesh cuts ensure the brand's consistent flavor and appearance as well.

In the Philippines, CAB is exclusively distributed by Meadowbrook Int'l. Co. Since its introduction in the early 1990s, Shimojima says the demand for the CAB brand in the country has grown tremendously, delivering over 300,000 pounds prime beef last year.

As a loyal client and consistent buyer of CAB, consuming a whopping 500 kg a month of tender-lean alone, Le Soufflé was among the first and only licensed establishments to carry the CAB brand, says Goldie San Luis, key accounts manager of Meadowbrook.

"Not all restaurants can use CAB on their menu. They have to be licensed. Le Soufflé has been exclusively cooking CAB right from the start," San Luis says.

Through Le Soufflé's "CAB Moodmaster" campaign, Shimojima hopes to enlighten Filipinos on superior angus beef. Indeed, not all angus are made equal.

E-mail the author at qandoo@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

SMOKED Tangaingue Burong Santol Salad in Makopa Basket

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Cooking for country's honor

Wherever he goes, chef Ron Bilaro proudly proclaims he is a Filipino

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

CHICAGO-BASED Filipino chef Ron Bilaro is in Manila for a much-needed, though short, vacation.

Bilaro, who works as assistant to some of Chicago's top chefs, as well as personal chef to Chicago's corporate families, comes home once in a while, but this particular visit, he says, is so far the most memorable and important.

Bilaro is providing his culinary services to Karangalan Benefit Cocktails Feb. 27, 6-8 p.m., at Restaurant 9501, 14/F of the ELJ Communications Center, Eugenio Lopez Jr. Street, Quezon City. Karangalan, which means honor or dignity, is an annual conference/festival that charts new "visions" for the country's future from a non-governmental standpoint.

Show case

Bilaro will showcase his culinary expertise by concocting a fusion of Asian and Western dishes ranging from appetizer to dessert, complemented with the most appropriate wines.

Proceeds of the cocktail-for-a-cause, which costs about P3,000 per person, will fund noteworthy projects of Karangalan, including an Education Summit to be held in April.

"I often watch Bantay Bata and TV Patrol through TFC (ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel) in Chicago and it breaks my heart to see innocent lives suffer. I know I can't change the world... but if I can make a difference with one, that is a good start," Bilaro says.

When he arrived in Manila he immediately called Marni Ocampo, a member of the organizing committee of Karangalan, and offered to help in any way he can.

"What's nice with chef Ron, wherever he goes he's always proud to say he's a Filipino. And he knows, as a chef, he can contribute something worthwhile to his fellow humans," says Panjee Gonzalez-Lopez, another Karangalan organizing committee member.

Bilaro offers his services to the Karangalan initiative because he believes the Filipino has everything needed to move the country forward.

Inspiration

"I'd like to somehow inspire younger Filipinos and show them they can be anything they want to be and encourage other Filipino-Americans to someday return to their homeland and pay it forward," Bilaro says.

Bilaro was born in Pasig and finished high school at the Pasig Catholic College. He studied at Letran and Marykroll College (now Miriam) before he moved to the West Coast of the United States where he lived for many years.

He joined United Airlines and became a flight attendant before deciding he really want-

CONTINUED ON

TUBA-POACHED Pears with Toasted Pistachio, Coconut, Honey, Spiced Mascarpone and Avocado Ice Cream

GRILLED Squid on Top of Cinnamon-Accented Roasted Squash with Pine Nuts

E-mail warns hotel guests of new scam

THE CONSUMER
Marietta Velasco Glaw

'Balikbayans' recounted on a radio program the scare they had during their visit to the Philippines

A WARNING is being circulated by e-mail about phone calls to demanding cash from hotel guests, mainly balikbayans, by making them withdraw from automated teller machines (ATM).

We thought it was exciting more than opera until we heard just the other day there complaints aired over Radio Mindanao Network through a phone patch with a radio station in New Jersey. The hotel guests, according to the radio announcer, complained that they received calls from a man that threatened their lives unless they gave him cash.

The incidents supposedly happened in three different hotels and in apartmentboard.

"It's actually an old racket," our editor informed us and forwarded to us a copy of an e-mail dated March 2004 relating exactly the same modus operandi employed by the con men in the recent stations.

Here are parts of that e-mail written by a former guest of a hotel in Mamo Boulevard. The e-mail starts with the search of the con man who just found out that his intended victim had requested to be transferred to another room.

"Sorry Sorry! (Sorry sorry ang ipoong kumalo) Kalit (sun kaya. 'di kaya lipsa. Sinong naiwag kang, the caller wanted to. So I asked him what kind of help. He then replied, money.

"I asked him again, 'How much?' He said P50,000. So I told him no (why) have that amount. He then started to threaten us—(Ikawang nonda (sorry) Pilipinas ang ya-sparano ko na. Ahawak na namin ang bisang hotel. (Ito Sayyad ko.

"He then asked to talk (to my companion) who... was also asked to give P50,000. The threats over the phone continued for almost an hour aside from text messages. (So (the companion) was told) (And if we did have the P50,000, we (should) put it in an envelope and give it to the hotel desk. But if we didn't have (the amount), it would have to be P1,000 plus we will phones and deliver (them to the) (7-Eleven stores (Vito Cruz."

The e-mail further recounted the lesson that the victims suffered.

Turn or not, the authorities should assure the public, instead of hedge, there about the reported cases, that all security measures are in place. One of the latest incidents is recorded in the district of the two-hour police.

Sniffing dog's fetish

Cerne Gabriela (cerne@INQ7.net) is warning consumers not to carry bottled water in places where there are sniffing dogs. You never can tell if you will encounter the same sniffing dog that barged for her bottled water when she was walking in a shopping mall. The dog barely missed his bun, he says.

Gabriela adds, "The guard with the dog was apologetic and informed me that the dog was addicted to mineral water bottles (that he in a busy place. Hope this this will serve as a warning to consumers and for mall administrators to learn the background of the dogs they display in their premises."

Praises

A satisfied customer is all praises for the manager of Century Seafood Restaurant. She wrote to us: "We were bothered by the smoke coming from cigarette-smoking customers seated near our table. When we couldn't stand it anymore, we complained to the waiter. This prompted the manager to talk to the smokers and explain to them the no-smoking policy of the restaurant. Thanks to the manager, the old smokers obliged without any trouble.

"I cannot say the same for the owners of other restaurants, particularly Cafe Florentine, Makati, where non-smoking diners are bothered by smokers. Whatever happened to the law (prohibiting smoking) in public places? Think estab-Industries don't even have the finishing right in their premises. Paging Mayor Atienza?"

Proper storage will keep produce fresh longer

PEOPLE'S grocery and storage habits may be causing fresh produce like fruits and vegetables to spoil prematurely.

To minimize wastage, GLAD, maker of wraps and bags, offers some helpful tips:

Make a shopping list. Before going to the grocery, list down all the items you need.

Get only what you need. Don't buy too many fruits and vegetables of the same kind. They may just remain unused until they go bad.

Don't sacrifice quality for a little saving. When going to the market, resist buying discounted but damaged produce.

Segregate. Some fruits and vegetables should not be kept together in the fridge to keep them fresh longer. Ethylene gas emitted by some fresh produce can cause other fruits and vegetables to ripen and decay or to wilt. Ethylene producers include apples, ripening bananas, grapes, mangoes, melons, nectarines, okra, papayas, peaches, peppers, pineapple, and tomatoes. On the other hand, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, potatoes, sweetener tomato, squash, sweet potatoes and watercress are ethylene sensitive.

Use GLAD FreshPromise Storage Bags. The balance of carbon dioxide and oxygen levels inside the bag is maintained keeping fruits and vegetables fresh longer.

Avoid overstocking. Stuffing as many things in the refrigerator causes the appliance to overwork and prevents cool air from properly circulating. This will lead to premature spoilage. Put fruits and vegetables in separate GLAD FreshPromise Bags to help keep food fresh longer. The bags also keep the fridge neat and organized by eliminating the need for bulky containers.

Next time you go shopping, make sure that what you buy will end up on the dinner table, not for trash bin. Store food items properly by using GLAD FreshPromise Storage Bags, which are available in leading supermarkets nationwide.

Cooking, baking classes

LEARN new dishes from experts.

The San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center's Culinary Class Series will tackle Thai cuisine in "Flavors of Thailand" with Chatpin Thaikaga, March 8, and "Creative Bread Baking" with chef Bobbie Lodge, March 11.

Classes are held 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center, Legaspi corner Gagle Streets, Barrio Tejeros, Pasig. A nominal fee of P500 will be charged.

Early reservation and payment are required. Call 6710876 local 602, 2771, 604 and 606. Only limited slots available!

TWO-IN-ONE

Gardenia Philippines, the country's leading bread maker, has combined two healthy natural ingredients in its Carrot-Raisin Loaf. Vitamin A-enriched, the bread uses only the freshest and finest ingredients. Gardenia breads are also hypoallergenic in accordance with standards set by the Department of Health (DOH) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Other Gardenia "healthy breads" include the High-Fiber Wheat Bread, High Calcium Loaf and the 3-Grain Loaf.

ASSORTED Cheeses and Nuts

FRUIT and Rosong Pati Platter

PIPINO, Singkamas and Green Mango Salad with Balandan Honey Vinaigrette

Cooking for country's honor

From page C2

of science in the culinary arts.

Bihiro graduated at the top of Moraine in the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago under Le Cordon Bleu. He then apprenticed as pastry chef at Shaquoda and underexecutive chef Lane Kuns.

Though primarily a personal chef for Chicago's corporate families, he also works at your chef to Art Smith, Oprah Winfrey's chef, from time to time.

Latest thing

"I have a set of clients that I cook dinner for on a regular basis," says Bihiro. "I do at least three to four big dinner parties for our regular clients. At this time, personal 'chefing' is considered one of the most in-demand professions in the United States."

Not surprisingly, Bihiro's specialty is Asian, but he also likes Latin cuisine so he does a fair of Asian and Latin fusion. Sometimes he does theme parties like Hawaiian, summer barbecue, Halloween or Margarita Night.

For the benefit cocktail, Bihiro will prepare at least two types of hors d'oeuvres, followed by a green salad. Main course will include beef, pork and seafood, like crab shell rolls, crab cake with mango chutney, grilled cod with aioli sauce.

Dessert will include citrus brûlée, tapioca banana tiramisu, mango sorbet in mangoes spoon and jelly.

Last Tuesday, with the help of his assistant chef Brad Coulthouse and FIOTA Mylene Inglatinido, Bihiro gave a sampling of special tes that he might also serve during the benefit cocktail.

Bihiro prepared Smoked Tuna Pampano Farming Spread Salad in Multiple Basket, Flattened Pate de Sal Crusted of Caramelized Onions, Pipino, Singkamas and Green Mango Salad with Balandan Honey Vinaigrette, Cheese most accepted Roasted Kalabasa with Pine Nuts and Grilled Squid, Organization of Beef and Pork Sun dried Tomato Feta, Roasted Eggplant Tahini and Wasabi Soy and Tuna poached Pears with Toasted Pistachio, Coconut, Honey Spiced Mascarpone and Avocado Ice Cream.

For inquiries on the benefit cocktail, call 0919.2108516 or e-mail magsip@yahoo.com.

CHICAGO-BASED Filipino chef Ron Bihiro

RAMAMGAMA'S organizing committee members (standing) Olive Isidro and Mami Ocampo; (seated) Wilo's Myrna Sagisonato and Purpie Gonzales-Lopez

FLATTENED Pate de Sal Crusted of Caramelized Onions

Scandinavian delights

DINING OUT

MANDARIN Oriental Manila presents Simply Scandinavian on Feb. 28-March 1 at the Garden's Bar. Featured specialties are Danish Bread/Bread Salad with red onions, Apple and Prune Stuffed Spareribs, Baked Veal with pickles in sauce, Danish Chicken Vinaiwa with mushrooms, Fried Salmon with dill and mustard sections, Roasted Pork with assorted meats, Braised Cabbage Pot with ground beef and rice, Danish chicken rice and almond pudding and Danish Raspberry Pudding. Call 7260888.

MAKATI Shangri-La's Circles Event Cafe offers cold appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, pizza, chicken samosas, lamb pomadillos, dimsum, tarteletas, pastries, ice cream and crepes. Stage, on the other hand, features Nestle Toll mochi, Nestle and Tuttlini Marshmallows, Tempura Marinaura, Tempura Tuna Hiramisu and Sukiyaki. Call 6308888.

THE DISHMORE, Antipolo offers the Celebration Package, which includes a wide selection of menus items plus a party cake to complete the banquet spread with a round of refreshments for all guests. Call 0908.819.5000/0918.5287777.

MANILA Restaurant features Bangus Salad, Grilled Bangus Belly with Garlic Candy Sauce and Crispy Kangkong, Garlic Mushroom stuffed with Bangus Sisig, Bangus Sinigang with Shellsamon, Tuna Steak with Bangus Sisig, Bamboo Crispy Pata, Binagang Baboy and Gingang sa Buko sa Dinakdak. Bangus Restaurant is located at Dela Rosa, Sta. Cruz in Legaspi Village, Makati. Call 8187331.

DINING OUT

SALTWOOD City features Cheesecake, etc. near the Ayala Orchard City Walk I, and it also at the SM City Makati in Cheesecake, etc. offers tasty and satisfying sandwiches, while Fruitlas proffers healthy fruit menu.

SAN MIG Pub and Restaurant celebrates the 4th Balesuan Festival featured are grilled combinations such as chicken and ribs, shrimp and ribs, Family Combo Special and San Mig Food Platter. They include coleslaw or homemade atchara and a choice from the bar's house offerings. Serve also baby back ribs and the prime ribs available in six, nine and 12 slabs. There is also the Ilo Ilo Beef sizzle ribs. San Mig Pub is at the Binang Town Center, Bacolod City. Call 0433/7418557.

THE COFFEE Bean and Tea Leaf presents White Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake and Cherry Pistachio Cheesecake this month. Call 7576882.

How to grill a perfect steak

DEAR REGGIE and I love steaks. Can you give me a recipe that is easy to prepare?
ANNIE GOMEZ

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aquino

Timing is key, so read on for Reggie's timetable for rare, medium rare and well-done meat

Grilling the perfect steak

Charcoal grilling lends a wonderful flavor to steaks. Follow these charcoal grilling techniques whenever possible:

• Divide your pit into two sections, one portion with more coal than the other. What would be perfect is to have a distance of about 2-2½ inches of coal below your steak/grilling grate or plate. The other section should have a distance of about 3-3½ inches.

• Make sure that your coal has been glowing your heated for 10 minutes before grilling. It must be very hot.

• Brush grilling grate or plate with olive oil.

• After seasoning, lay steaks on the portion of the grilles that has more coal. Leave steaks to turn to golden brown, approximately 30-40 seconds per side.

• Use tongs when grilling. Never use forks as piercing the meat will cause the loss of juices.

• Once the perfect steak color is achieved, move steaks to the cooler part of the grill. Leave to cook for desired doneness.

• The key to perfect steak is perfect timing! Use this timetable as a guide: for 1-inch steaks, total cooking time is 7 minutes (4 minutes and a half per side) for rare, 8½ minutes for medium rare, and 9-6 minutes for rare, or very well done.

Cooking time may vary depending on the intensity of heat and/or the size of the steak. Don't. Keep an eye on them.

The technique is tricky in the beginning but as you go along grilling your steaks this way you'll be able to judge by doneness just by visual look of it. Practice makes perfect!

When charcoal grilling is not possible, the next best thing is stovetop grilling or pan-frying.

• For best stove top grilles or a thick frying pan for this purpose, the thicker the better, I say cast iron or heavy-duty. Heat high heat for approximately 5 minutes.

• Brush grilles or pan with olive oil.

GRILLING is a perfection is an art form.

• Lay seasoned steaks on grilles/pans. Lower heat to low and continue cooking following the same cooking time and instructions for charcoal grilling.

More tips

• Perfect steak means perfect meat! The better the meat, the better the steak! And to say that quality comes at a price and an amount of proper grilling techniques will help if you want to indulge.

• I like my steaks 2½ to 3 inch thick with as more than sea salt rub salt and freshly ground pepper. Depending on my mood, I sometimes add a bit of fresh rosemary and/or thyme.

• Season steaks just before grilling.

• My favorite steak cut is rib-eye, the eye with the most marbling. The more the marbling, the softer and more succulent the steak. Marbling means streaks of fat that melt as we do the meat.

• My favorite steaks are Angus, US Prime Beef and, whenever I can the rare, Kobe and Matsusaka! An alternative would be Australian steaks or Australian cattle slaughtered in the Philippines. Now I wish I could actually say local beef!

• My favorite stovetop grilles—MBG

• Thaw steaks in the refrigerator. Leaving it to thaw at room temperature makes the meat lose a lot of its juices. To serve steaks for lunch, transfer them to the refrigerator to the evening and take them out to season just before grilling.

• After grilling, move meat to rest for 3-5 minutes to allow juices to relax. It also gives meat time to develop tender.

• My steak sources: Santa Gelt for Angus and Australian steaks, prime beef for Australian cattle slaughtered locally at reasonable prices (Vinia Gonzalez-9285047). For bulk orders of over 10 kilos, PFC (Department of U.S., Australian and Canadian Meat and Poultry—Vicky Diaz 0917.5114521). If you want PFC meat but don't need 10 kilos, we will accommodate your orders, a service PFC and I do for my students. The line includes US meat—Angus, Prime Beef and Kobe from Japan, etc. (Gina—9285086/9285182)

What are your favorite steak condiments? Sauces? Pepper Sauce?
LYRA DE QUEZADA

I don't believe in mashing good meat with a lot of sauces. Like I said I like wine pairings because this allows me to discover and enjoy the full flavor of good beef. But I have been asked for a list of my personal favorites so far as store-bought condiments are concerned so here it is:

• Steak sauce—I don't have one. I haven't found a brand that I could truly like. You could go for A1 (as if you didn't know that) 9757-80

• My favorite Worcestershire sauce—Lea & Perrins. By definition of what this sauce should be, this is the only Worcestershire!

• My favorite pepper sauce: Chipotle Tabasco. A must-have! Wonderful smoked chili flavor!

• My favorite barbecue sauce: If I have to use one, I'd make my own! But from a bottle I'd say Lea & Perrins or HP Barbecue Sauce. These brands aren't too overpowering.

• Every recipe I promise to point out next week together with the chief coordinator of the long overdue Spanish cooking course!

My summer cooking class schedule is out, call 5129299 for a copy.

For comments or suggestions, text 0917 [illegible]

SOME—The marbling in Kobe and Matsusaka beef makes them the cream superstars in the world and is mildly delicious.